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OR,

The Mystery of No. 13.

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"THAD BURR, THE INVINCIBLE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

THADDEUS BURR, the detective, was as free from superstition as any man who ever lived, and yet when he entered No. 13, commonly designated in the neighborhood by the gruesome name of "Ghost Hall," he was impressed with a sensation of dread, such as he had never experienced before.

It was not the peculiar number of the house (13), which is held by so many people in superstitious awe; nor the horrible stories current among the neighboring gossips regarding the place, nor any fear of harm that might come to himself in the house. And yet all of these may have combined in some mysterious way to work upon the ordinarily practical mind of the detec-

THAD WAS HORRIFIED TO BEHOLD THAT THE NICHE CONTAINED WHAT APPEARED TO BE A CORPSE.

tive and give him the feeling of dread just mentioned.

The house was one of a series of residences composing a block in the old-fashioned section of New York City known as Greenwich Village.

It had been occupied by the same family for several generations, up to within a few weeks previous to Burr's visit, when it had been suddenly and mysteriously vacated.

Very little was known in the neighborhood, even by the oldest resident, of the family, owing to the fact that they kept themselves aloof from their neighbors.

Whether this was due to their being a very old and aristocratic family, and consequently exclusive, or to the theory held by many that there was a very large skeleton in the family closet, nobody knew, but certain it was that not half a dozen people in the whole village had so much as seen the faces of any of the family.

The shutters were always closed, and it was a rare occurrence to see any one entering or leaving the house, and when such did occur, the person was sure to be so muffled or veiled that a sight of the face was impossible.

Another circumstance which impressed the neighbors and gave rise to endless gossip and conjecture, was the arrival every day at exactly three in the afternoon of a close carriage, from which would emerge a mysterious person, enveloped from head to foot in a black cloak or robe similar to that worn by certain orders of priesthood, and so completely did the garment disguise the wearer that no one had ever been able to discover the mysterious person's sex.

Notwithstanding all the secrecy surrounding the house and its occupants, it had been somehow discovered a week or so previous to Burr's visit that the place had been finally vacated.

As soon as this was ascertained the curious neighbors began to pry about the old residence, peep in key-holes and other meager openings and listen for any sounds that might come from the interior, and had, so report said, finally been rewarded by hearing strange, unearthly cries as of some one in terrible agony, but had never been able to see anything.

The matter was at length reported to Inspector Byrnes, and he in turn had detailed Detective Burr to investigate it.

"I do not imagine there is anything in it," remarked the inspector, after detailing the story of the detective as it had been reported to him. "It is probably one of those silly affairs, the outgrowth of ignorance and superstition. Still, there is so much excitement in the neighborhood that we must make an effort to unravel the mystery."

"Very well," replied Thad. "I will do my best in the matter, and if there is such a thing as penetrating or solving the mystery, I believe I can do it."

"I believe so, too," responded the inspector, warmly. "Your past record is such as to encourage the hope, and that is why I have assigned you to the case, Thad, in preference to any of the other boys. Good-by, and success to you."

"Thank you, inspector. Good-by!"

An hour later Thad called at the house in question.

It was an ordinary three-story brick house, and as he had no key, the detective found some difficulty in effecting an entrance.

Every door was barred and bolted, as though the place had been a prison, and as the doors were constructed of solid oak, there was no such thing as forcing them.

At the rear of the house there was an old-fashioned porch extending only up to the first story, and closed in on three sides by trellis-work, over which clambered a thick mass of vines.

"Here," mused the detective, "is the solution to the problem of getting into the house," and, without more ado, he climbed up the lattice and vines to the roof of the porch.

Four windows looked out upon this roof, each guarded by a pair of heavy Venetian blinds.

He tried each in turn, and finally found one that yielded to his jimmy, and he succeeded in prying it open.

When this was accomplished, the task of removing four of the diminutive panes, together with the intersecting sash, was simple, and the investigator soon found himself inside the mysterious house.

The room into which he had climbed was a bedchamber, and, to his surprise, it was fully and luxuriously furnished, while the bed showed unmistakable evidence of having been recently occupied.

From that moment the strange feeling of dread, already spoken of, came over the detective, but he shook it off, and proceeded to examine the premises.

Everything in the room indicated wealth and refinement, from the rich Turkish rugs covering the floor to the heavy damask curtains, the costly paintings on the wall, the satin-covered bed and the innumerable articles of rare bric-a-brac, to say nothing of the magnificent carved furniture.

The first thing that impressed the detective was the fact, indicated by the character of the various trinkets lying about, as well as certain articles of wearing apparel, that the room was,

or had been, occupied by a lady, probably a young one.

This caused him to feel guilty of having profaned sacred ground, and he turned to leave the room at once. But he found to his dismay that the door was locked!

Fortunately he had a skeleton key, with which he soon managed to unlock the door, that led into a large hall, flanking which, on either side, were various other rooms, all of them, like the first, securely locked.

As it made no difference which one he entered, Thad proceeded to unlock and open the first one he came to.

Upon entering this room, he found it to be an extraordinarily spacious one, and like the first apartment he had been in, it was gorgeously furnished and decorated, but, unlike it, this one was not a bedroom; and, indeed, it was difficult to say what kind of a room it was.

In some respects it appeared to be a drawing-room and in others a library, and in others again it resembled a remarkably richly appointed study.

There was a wealth of pictures, statues, bronzes, quaint twisted vases, shelves of rare books, firearms and swords of every conceivable pattern, stuffed birds and animals, etc., as to bewilder the beholder; and, what rendered the place even more impressive, the blinds of the windows being closed, there was just enough light admitted through the partially turned slats to render the various objects faintly visible.

As the detective desired to give this apartment a thorough examination, he proceeded to one of the front windows (the room was at the front of the house) with the intention of opening the shutters to admit more light; but, just as he was about to raise the sash, he chanced to glance through the half-turned slats down at the street, when he was startled to behold the carriage which had been described to him, drive up in front of the dwelling No. 13, and, as he watched, a tall, erect figure emerged from the closely curtained vehicle and crossed the pavement toward the front door.

The figure was clad in the manner before described, and, in spite of its extreme height, there was something in the gait that suggested the female.

A driver sat upon the box, also muffled to the eyes, notwithstanding it was rather warm weather.

While Thad was still lost in contemplation of the strange affair, he was awakened to a realization of his situation by the rattling of a key in the hall door.

It was unquestionably the same mysterious person of whom he had heard, the only irregular thing about the whole proceedings being the fact that, instead of three o'clock, it was now after six in the afternoon, the detective having chosen that hour as the one at which he would be least likely to be disturbed in his investigations.

A moment later the detective heard footsteps ascending the stairs with a quick, nervous tread, and feeling sure that the visitor would enter that particular room, he made haste to conceal himself behind a heavy portiere.

He had no more than done so than the clicking of a key in the lock of one of the doors leading into the hall (not the one at which Thad had entered) announced that the mysterious visitor was about entering that apartment.

The detective waited in breathless expectancy, but not long, for the door quickly opened, and in strode the figure.

Once inside the room, the visitor threw back the cowl or hood of the strange garment, revealing the wearer's head, and the mystery of the sex of the strange person was at an end.

It was a woman.

And a most remarkable one in appearance. As has been mentioned, she was extremely tall, really over six feet, and possessed a face that looked as though it had been carved out of some sort of metal, from its sternness, coldness, and peculiar bronze tint.

Her hair was as black as a raven's wing, but slightly streaked with gray, and her eyes, which were also very black, were large, and as they glanced restlessly about the room, seemed to flash flames of fire.

Detective Burr could not fail to notice that her hands, which she ungloved as soon as she got inside the room, were remarkably small, and well formed, and also that her foot was small and shapely.

She proceeded at once to one end of the room where a large cabinet stood, and taking a bunch of keys from her pocket, unlocked and opened one of the drawers, and taking therefrom a package of papers, she concealed them in her bosom, and closed and locked the drawer.

She then strode across to the opposite side of the room, and, once more producing the keys, placed one of them in a keyhole, the existence of which no one would ever have suspected, as it was located in the very center of a distemper painting on the wall, and opened a door or panel.

The bottom of the panel was about four feet from the floor, and full six feet high by, perhaps, two feet wide.

Thad leaned forward eagerly to see what was behind the panel, and when he succeeded in catching a glimpse of it, was horrified to behold that it covered a niche in the wall, and that the niche contained what appeared to be a corpse!

The woman merely glanced at the figure, whatever it was, in this niche, and again closed the panel and locked it.

Having done this, she strode quickly to the door, walked out and locked it after her.

The detective strained his ears to ascertain which way she had gone, intending, if she had left the house, to follow her; but he could hear nothing.

He therefore glided softly to the door and put his ear to the keyhole.

Still he could hear nothing.

He knew it was not possible for her to have gone down-stairs, for he would have heard her; and even if she had proceeded along the hall toward the rear of the house, he must have heard her footsteps.

He strained his ears, and scarcely breathed in the intensity of his eagerness to catch a sound of the woman's footsteps; but, not the slightest sound fell upon his ear.

What could it mean?

Was it possible that she was still standing just outside the door?

Perhaps she had seen something that caused her to suspect his presence, and was waiting for him to come out?

If such should prove to be the case, it might not be pleasant to go out, just then, a move he was considering expedient.

Then, suddenly, while he was revolving these thoughts in his mind, he was startled to hear a most unearthly and blood-curdling scream in a distant part of the house!

CHAPTER II.

A GHASTLY DISCOVERY.

THAD forgot his apprehension about the mysterious woman waiting for him outside the door when he heard that scream.

There was something so pitiful, so heartrending in that single shriek, that the very depths of his gallant nature were stirred, for the voice was unquestionably that of a woman.

Without waiting, therefore, to consider the possible consequences, the detective sprang into the hall.

To his surprise the mysterious woman was nowhere to be seen.

For an instant he was in a quandary what to do.

His first idea, of course, was to rescue the person, whoever it was, in distress; but it was impossible to locate her from the one scream he had heard.

Although to the best of his reckoning the voice had come from somewhere in the rear of the house, possibly the bedroom into which the detective had first made his way on entering the house, still, there was nothing certain about it; and again, it was quite as important to follow the mysterious woman, as it appeared to Thad that through her was to come the solution of the whole mystery.

But where had she gone? Following his first impulse, he returned to the room he had just quitted, and hastening to the front window, looked out.

The carriage was gone!

It did not seem possible that, in the short space of time intervening between the woman's exit from the room and Thad's entrance into the hall, she could have reached the carriage; therefore she must still be in the house, and he was determined to find her.

His first thought was of the bedroom he had first entered, and thither he hastened.

When he reached the door, to his surprise he found it relocked.

This could mean nothing else than that some one had been there, for the detective had left it open on quitting the chamber.

Without pausing to consider the danger of entering a room unbidden in which an unfriendly person, not to say an enemy, lurks, Thad drew out his skeleton key with the purpose of unlocking the door, but, ere he had time to place the key in the lock, the same blood-curdling scream was repeated.

He had no difficulty in locating it this time; it came from down-stairs.

All thought of entering the bedroom vanished, and, turning, he dashed down-stairs in the direction of the sound.

A dozen rapid bounds brought him to the lower floor, and here he paused to listen.

All was quiet now; not a murmur, not a footstep was to be heard anywhere!

The detective was utterly mystified.

While not believing in apparitions, he did not wonder that the ignorant people of the neighborhood had named the mysterious old house "Ghost Hall."

But he had no time for reflection, and he proceeded at once to try to open the door leading into the room on the right of the hall, it appearing to him that the voice had emanated in that direction.

He found the task of opening the door no easy

one, for the lock was a ponderous one which his skeleton key could not affect, and he was compelled to resort to his jimmy.

With this he finally succeeded in prying the door open.

Here he found a spacious and sumptuously-furnished drawing-room, but no one was there.

He searched in every conceivable place where a human being could be concealed; but it was no use; nobody was there.

From whence, then, could the scream have emanated?

The drawing-room was connected with another room in the rear of it by folding-doors.

Thad tried these, and found them also locked, or rather bolted from the other side, and therefore there was no chance of opening them from his side.

So he did not attempt it, but stepped into the hall, with the idea of effecting an entrance through one of the hall-doors.

Again he had recourse to his skeleton-key, and was about to apply it to the lock, when a sound from within caused him to pause.

It was the sound of some one singing—evidently a young girl—in a sweet, plaintive voice, and accompanying herself on a mandolin!

The song was one of the deepest melancholy, and the singer's voice had a chord of sadness that was almost tragic in the intensity of its pathos.

The detective was now more mystified than ever, and, of course, more anxious to get into the room and explore the mystery; but all thought of forcing his way in had suddenly been abandoned.

As there was a woman inside, he need not go to that extremity. Waiting, therefore, until the music had ceased, Thad rapped gently at the door and waited for a response.

But, as none came, after waiting a reasonable time, he rapped again.

Still there was no response, and he repeated the knock.

But, it was no use. Not a sound or movement inside indicated that his rap had been heard.

The detective now grew determined, and followed up his former gentle rapping with a vigorous blow that made the door ring, and the echoes to reverberate through the old house in a most ghostly manner.

But, with the same result; no answer from within.

Thad was in despair.

Whoever the mysterious person inside was, it was evident she had no notion of opening the door.

More determined, now, to get in, he applied his skeleton-key, but as in the case of the other door, the lock would not yield.

He, therefore, placed the jimmy between the door and jamb, and giving it a vigorous wrench, the barrier flew open, and with a slight tremor of apprehension, the investigator stepped inside.

A hasty glance about the room convinced him that if anybody was there, he or she must be concealed in a very small space, for, unlike the other apartments, this was almost destitute of furniture.

The floor of inlaid wood was bare of carpet or rug, while the walls were equally destitute of hangings or decoration. Indeed, with the exception of a large leather-covered easy-chair, and a sofa to match, there was no furniture of any kind in the apartment.

Where, then, mused the detective, could the sad, sweet musician have gone?

He examined the sofa, and also the chair, to ascertain whether they were so constructed as to conceal a human being; and at the end of a brief scrutiny was convinced that they were not.

Thad Burr was, now, a very much puzzled detective, but he was by no means satisfied that there was not some trickery about the matter, and continued his investigations.

One of the first things he thought of was to look for secret panels in the wall. He was inspired to this by what he had witnessed upstairs, and at once proceeded to make a careful examination of every part of the wall as high as he could reach.

But to no purpose. The wall was one unbroken field of shining tiles, so nicely jointed as to leave no visible seam; so the idea of a secret door was untenable.

There was but one place where such a thing would have been possible, and that was a large tablet of a different kind of material from the rest of the wall.

This tablet was about two by six feet in size, of a dark bronze color, and from general appearance seemed as though it might be intended to swing or slide aside, and the detective turned his attention to it, at once.

He examined minutely every part of it, and pried around the edges with his jimmy; but was finally forced to the conclusion that the tablet did not move—that it was as much a part of the wall as any tile in it.

This was discouraging and baffling.

Thad had encountered some great mysteries in the course of his career as a detective, but this was a little the most dense of anything he had ever run across.

It was equal to the feat of some spiritist

"medium," or the marvelous feats of the incomparable Robert Houdin.

What had become of the singer? For he would have taken his oath that she was in that room five minutes before, and it was an utter impossibility for her to escape.

And yet, she was not there!

After making another careful survey of the apartment and its few contents, he abandoned the search, and returned to the room above.

He thought first of going directly to the bedroom, as he believed after all that if anybody was in the house they were in that place; but when he arrived on the second floor again, it occurred to the detective to see what it really was behind the panel that had looked to him from the distance as a corpse.

So he went into the large apartment again, and was soon in front of the secret panel.

He had no trouble in tracing the outlines of the panel or of finding the key-hole; but the latter discovery was of no use to him, as he had no key to fit it.

He did not stop on this account, however, but forcing his jimmy in at the side of the panel, soon pried it open.

As the secret panel swung back his heart stood still for an instant with the anticipation of what he was likely to find concealed behind it; but the next instant this feeling gave place to one of disappointment and disgust.

The niche behind the panel was absolutely empty!

This was the greatest surprise he had yet encountered.

What could it mean? Was it some optical illusion—some feat of jugglery, that had led him to believe he saw a corpse there as plain as anything he had ever seen in his life?

The shrewd detective was pretty well disgusted by this time with the whole matter, and decided not to spend much time in speculation, but to push on his inquisition as rapidly as possible.

He therefore closed the panel, and left the apartment with the intention of carrying out his original plan, of forcing open the door of the bedroom at the rear of the house and discovering who or what it contained.

This he was anxious to do because, although he had been deceived both in the matter of the scream and the mysterious musician, he felt certain that the key to the problem was to be found in that room. This was impressed upon him by the fact that the door had been shut and locked after he had passed through—a thing that could only have been accomplished by human hands.

When he tried his skeleton key in the lock, however, he was dismayed to find that it would not unlock the door as it had done before, showing that there must be an extra bolt on the inside.

And the door being extra heavy and of solid oak, the jimmy would not cause it to yield.

There was only one alternative remaining for him, and that was to climb through the transom, an extraordinarily hazardous enterprise if any one intent upon mischief should happen to be lurking beyond the door.

But, Thad was too desperate, now, to pause for a matter of that kind, and so, returning to the large room for a chair, he was soon mounted upon it, and in position to thrust open the transom.

The jimmy rendered this task comparatively simple. Forcing the point under the edge of the sash and giving it a twist, was all that was necessary, and the transom was open.

Balancing himself upon the back of the chair and drawing himself up the frame, the detective soon thrust his head through the opening.

His first glance fell upon the bed, and the sight that met him sent the blood tingling to his heart and made his flesh creep.

There in the bed, as if in a tranquil sleep, lay one of the most beautiful young women Thad had ever beheld—dead!

CHAPTER III.

LOOKS LIKE A CLUE.

It was some minutes before the detective could move, so transfixed was he with amazement and horror.

It was not the fact of finding a corpse alone. Such things had occurred to him too often to produce much impression upon him; but the fact of the girl having got, by some mysterious means, into her present position within the short space of time he had been in the house—that puzzled him.

That the screams he had heard had emanated from this same unfortunate beauty, and that the mysterious woman had something to do with it, he had not the least doubt.

The thing that puzzled him in this connection, was that he should have imagined the scream coming from down-stairs when he was at the very door of the room where the unfortunate was confined.

Thad could not help but think of another matter in connection with the strange affair, and that was the fact, first, that the second scream took place after the tall woman had apparently left the house, and also that the door of the bedroom was locked before he went down-stairs.

This indicated one of two things: Either the murder (if such it was) was committed by someone who was still in the house—perhaps in that room, or that the girl had committed suicide.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the detective decided to enter the chamber, at all hazards and probe the matter to the bottom.

Casting his eye about, therefore, to ascertain whether any one else was in the room, and seeing no one, he at once drew himself up and crawled through the transom and let himself down on the inside.

His first move, after getting inside, was to make a thorough examination of the chamber, to ascertain whether anybody was concealed therein or not.

There were two wardrobes or closets in the apartment which might offer a hiding-place. These the detective searched thoroughly; but with the result of discovering nothing of a suspicious character.

He then turned his attention to other portions of the apartment, and each was searched minutely; but with the same result.

He now, for the first time, took a look at the corpse.

Horrors! It was the same face he had seen in the niche opened by the mysterious woman!

There could be no doubt of it.

It was the same refined, classical face, the same inky-black hair and long, dark lashes fringing the closed eyes, and sweeping low upon the marble-like cheeks, and the same slightly sensual lips still tinged with a faint shadow of their original ripe color.

But how had she got from the niche to this place without his knowledge, and while the door was all the while locked?

It then occurred to the detective that possibly she was not dead, but had fallen into one of those fits of catalepsy which so closely resemble death as often to be mistaken for it, even by experts.

This led him to put his hand upon the girl's hand and afterward her face.

Both were icy cold.

He then placed his hand over the region of her heart.

Not the slightest pulsation was discernible.

That she was dead, he now no longer doubted, and concluded, before proceeding further, to notify the proper authorities.

Turning to the door, he found, as he had suspected, that it was bolted from the inside.

Throwing back the bolt, the detective applied his skeleton key, unlocked the door, stepped out and relocked the door from the outside again.

Then hastening down-stairs, he was about to open the front door, when a repetition of the same unearthly scream caused him to stop.

The sound came this time, unquestionably, from the bedroom which he had just left.

A little irritated by what he began to believe to be the clever trickery of some designing person, but more determined than ever to discover and expose the mystery, or plot, he bounded upstairs again as rapidly as his legs would carry him.

To insert the key into the lock and throw open the door was but the work of an instant; and yet, when he had done so, and burst into the room, he was as much astonished as he had been at the discovery of the supposed corpse, to find that the same was now gone!

Yes, the bed was as empty as it had been on his first entrance to the apartment, and the detective stood dumfounded.

All thought of mere trickery vanished; there was something tragically serious connected with the affair, for that the girl had been murdered, and that her murderers were still in the house, he now believed, and his business at present was to ferret them out, wherever they might be concealed.

One thing he could not understand: from whence had that scream emanated? As the girl was cold when he examined her, she must have been dead some time, so, how could it have come from her lips?

And now that the detective came to reconsider the matter, he was certain that the scream was that of a young woman.

Could it be possible that the murderers were about to victimize another, and that he had in some way intercepted them each time?

This was what it looked like, and Thad was now bent upon discovering the truth, if it cost him his life to do it.

One thing was certain, and that was that the murderers, if such there were, could not have made their escape through the single door of the room, much less have taken their victim out that way, in the short time it had taken the detective to go down-stairs and back; therefore the escape must have been effected in some other direction.

Thad therefore set to work to discover the means of egress.

He first examined the backs of each one of the closets in turn for secret doors or panels; but only to find that they had nothing of the kind.

A thorough sounding of the walls resulted in the same conclusion, and Thad was about losing heart, when something about a cabinet standing near the wall attracted his attention.

This cabinet was made of ebony, was some

six feet high, and appeared to contain a series of drawers extending from top to bottom.

The moment he looked at the cabinet Thad decided that these drawers were only a sham, and that the whole front was one solid door.

This belief was confirmed a moment later when he found that the cabinet, instead of simply standing against the wall, was made into it, and was more than confirmed when he attempted to pry open the drawers with the jimmy.

There was no indication on the outside of the door of either lock or hinge, and the cabinet must therefore be locked and unlocked by means of a secret spring somewhere, and he made a diligent search for this, as he did not like to spoil the article of furniture.

He went over every inch of the front, from top to bottom; but could find nothing that yielded to his touch.

Again he was on the point of resorting to the jimmy, when, in running his eye along the wall, he noticed, a short distance from the cabinet, what seemed to be a brass nail driven into the wall.

Not one in ten thousand would have taken any notice of it, and even Thad would scarcely have done so only for the fact that, being so completely nonplused in every other direction, he was ready to accept anything as a clue.

Consequently as soon as he espied this nail, he sprung at it with the greatest eagerness, placed his thumb upon it and pressed.

To his disappointment, nothing resulted from the action.

Still he was not satisfied that the nail had not something to do with the cabinet, and he proceeded to examine it carefully.

He had not done so long, when he noticed that the edges of the nail's head showed signs of having been drawn up, instead of being pushed or pulled down; so placing the point of his knife under the head of the nail, to his delight he saw it raise out of the wall!

Nor was this his only source of gratification.

When the nail had been drawn about half an inch out of the wall, the door of the cabinet slowly swung open.

The next instant Thad stood before the cabinet's open door, and as he had suspected, found that it was nothing more nor less than the opening to a secret passage.

Be was well aware of the danger attending the entrance to such a place; but such was the state of his eagerness, at the moment, he did not stop to consider the possible consequences, and plunged into the passage.

As soon as he had taken a few steps the detective discovered that the passage led off in two directions.

Adopting one of the courses at random, he followed it for a dozen yards or more, when it suddenly came to an end.

He was about to retrace his steps, when it occurred to him that possibly there was an outlet to the passage, and he began to investigate.

The first thing he did was to sound one of the walls, and the result was that he found only a very thin wall intervening between him and the outside.

A little feeling about the wall with his fingers soon revealed the fact that the thin wall was a panel or door, and applying his jimmy, he pried it open.

Thad found himself in the niche in the wall in which he had first seen the corpse of the young girl.

Here indeed was a clue; at least to how the corpse had been removed from the niche in the bedroom.

Perhaps the other branch of the passage would lead to further developments, and the detective hastily retraced his steps until he arrived at the conjunction of the other fork.

He had not followed this far when he found himself descending a flight of stairs.

Down, down he went, and he soon became aware that he was below the level of the ground floor of the building, and still there seemed to be no end to the stairs.

Finally, however, he reached the bottom, and flashing his dark-lantern about, the detective saw that he was in a stone-walled and floored basement room, damp and musty.

Proceeding along the wall as being the most likely way of finding the door, if there were any, he went for some distance, came to the angle of the wall, followed the other wall some distance and finally came to a door.

To his surprise the door was not fastened, showing that whoever had been in the room above had left in too great a hurry to fasten the door after them.

Opening the door, Thad found that it led to a flight of stairs, which, he could see by the stars overhead, led to the outside world.

A hasty climb up the short flight of steps, brought the detective into the back yard from which he had climbed to the bedroom window.

So, after all his labor, he found himself exactly where he started, and all he had learned was that there had been a girl in the house who appeared to be dead, and that she had been mysteriously spirited away, almost before his very eyes.

"At all events," mused the detective, "I now

These mysterious people cannot go flitting about from one part of the house to another without my knowing how they do it. What's that?"

What caused his exclamation at this point in his soliloquy, was the appearance of a light at the window above—the third story—a part of the house which Thad had not yet explored.

As he looked, the light was seen to move from one place to another, showing that it was in the hands of some one.

Thad waited to see no more from the outside, but hastening down the stair leading into the basement, he was soon mounting the secret stairway again, and in a few minutes more he was out of the bedroom into the main hall of the house.

Making his way to the stairway leading to the floor above, Thad began rapidly to mount.

He had scarcely attained a quarter of the distance when a stern voice at the head of the stairs caused him to pause.

Looking up, the detective saw the broad, red, unshaven face of a man peering over the banisters, the owner of the face holding a lamp in one hand and shading his eyes with the other.

"Who are ye, an' w'at d'ye want?" demanded the gruff voice.

CHAPTER IV.

MISTAKING EACH OTHER'S CHARACTERS.

THAD and the man at the top of the stairs stared at each other for a full minute before either spoke, after what the stranger had said at the start.

Thad could not tell what the fellow thought of him, but he himself was convinced from the start that the fellow was a burglar.

Under these or any other circumstances the detective could hardly place himself in any other position than that of trespasser, for even if the other was a burglar, the detective could have nothing to say, legally.

On the other hand, if it should turn out that the man belonged to the house, the detective would have still less to say.

This was what kept him silent.

The other was the first to break the silence.

"Ye ain't answered my question yit," he ejaculated. "W'at are ye doin' here?"

"The very question I was about to put to you," retorted Thad, with a desperate effort at bluff.

"Wal, I like that!" growled the man. "I want yer to know that I belongs here."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Excuse me," said Thad, coolly. "In that case I am at fault and must ask your pardon."

"That's all very nice," grumbled the other, "but it ain't tellin' w'at ye're doin' here nor w'at ye wants here."

"Come down or allow me to come up, old fellow," responded the detective in a kindly tone, "and I will explain my mission."

"Not by a jug-full," snorted the man in a frightened tone. "Ye don't do nuther, if I know myself! Ye don't git no drop enter me; I know yer too well fer that."

"What do you mean?"

"That I knows yer game. Ye're a burglar!"

Thad could not refrain from laughing.

"The very thing that I took you for, my good fellow."

"D'ye mean ter say ye ain't one?" demanded the man in a modified voice.

"I certainly do."

"Then, w'at are ye doin' here?"

"I came in to see what you were doing here."

"Me?"

"Yes."

"I belong here."

"So it appears now, but I had no means of knowing this when on the outside of the house. When I saw your light at the window I naturally supposed there was something wrong, and made bold to come in."

"I see," said the man reflectively. "But yer must 'a' bin in ther back yard, wasn't yer?"

Thad saw that he was caught, and the only way out of his dilemma was to explain who he was.

"Yes, I was in the back yard, my good man," replied the detective. "The fact is, I am a detective, detailed to investigate the apparent mystery surrounding this house. I am glad I met you, as you can doubtless throw a good deal of light upon the subject. What position do you hold in this house?"

The mention of the fact that Thad was a detective seemed to reassure the man at once, and he began descending the stairs, rather timidly, however.

"I'm the butler," he explained when he had arrived sufficiently near to talk. "Come on down into the library where we kin sit down."

Thad followed the man down the stairs, and as he went, could not but notice that the fellow was a giant in stature.

He had also seen enough of his face to discern that he was a man of probably sixty years, and that he possessed a hard, stern face, dark in complexion, and apparently very much bronzed in addition, and resembling somebody whom he had seen, but for the moment the detective could not recall who it was.

This kept agitating his mind all the way down, and it was not till the man stopped in the library, put the light upon the table, and turned toward the detective, that it flashed upon him where he had seen a face like it.

It was that of the mysterious woman!

"Sit down," said the butler, pushing a chair toward the detective.

Thad sat down, after which the butler also took a seat.

"W'at did ye want ter ax me?" inquired the old man, looking curiously at the detective.

"A number of things," replied Thad. "In the first place, I want to ask you the reason for the family vacating the house, if, indeed, they have done so."

The old butler was thoughtful a long time, and appeared to be considering whether it would be proper for him to answer or not.

At length he replied:

"Yas, they hev left the place; but I don't know as I ought to say anything about why they went."

"Was it on account of the strange noises, and apparitions about the house?"

The old butler stared at the detective in surprise.

"How did you know anything about them things?" he asked at length.

"Being a detective, I am supposed to know everything; but that is not answering my question. Was, or was not, the family frightened away by certain horrible noises, and sights heard and seen about the house?"

The old man looked more puzzled than ever.

For some minutes he could do nothing but stare in dumb amazement at the detective.

Finally he replied, in a frightened voice:

"I didn't s'pose that anybody outside the family knowed nothin' 'bout that."

"Will you answer my question?" insisted the detective.

"Eh?"

"Will you tell me whether the family moved away from the house on account of its being, as they supposed, haunted?"

"My God!" exclaimed the old man, springing to his feet, and fixing his great, black eyes upon the detective, as though he thought him some monster.

"Sit down, sit down," demanded Thad, in a reassuring tone. "I am not going to hurt you, even if I do know a few of the family secrets."

The old man sunk timidly upon his chair.

"Now, my good man, will you tell me what I ask you?" queried the detective, in a kindly but firm voice.

"It will go no furdur?" murmured the butler.

"Certainly not."

"Wal, then, they did."

And the old man glanced about him in as frightened a manner as though the secret he had divulged was to cost him his life.

"That is what I supposed. How long have these disturbances been going on?"

Again the old man arose; but this time in a spirit of impatience, at what he evidently considered the detective's impertinence.

"I haven't no right to answer these questions," he growled, "and I won't do it."

Thad saw that the only way to deal with the fellow was to be severe, and so he said:

"See here, my good man, when you refuse to answer a detective, you probably do not know what you are doing, so I will enlighten you. If you answer my questions all right, it will be well for you; but if you refuse, I will simply have to take you to Police Headquarters, where they will compel you to answer."

Again the old man sunk into his chair, and his face had undergone a complete change. It was now the picture of abject woe. As he sat down he buried his face in his hands and remained thus for a long time.

Thad allowed him to take his time, knowing that it would do no good to break in upon his grief.

At length he raised his head and his eyes were wet with tears.

"I don't see why you should make me tell them secrets," he almost sobbed.

"It is for your own and the family's good," explained the detective. "Besides, as I told you before, whatever you tell me will be kept as sacredly as if it were my own family secrets."

"I wouldn't mind tellin' ye," murmured the old man, "only my master made me promise when he was on his death-bed that whatever went on in the house I wouldn't never tell to mortal man."

"How long has he been dead?"

"'Bout a month."

"Was there anything peculiar or mysterious about his death?"

"Oh, yes, sir. He died very suddint, and even the doctors didn't know nothing about what was the matter with him."

"Had he been ailing long? That is, was he a confirmed invalid, or anything of that kind?"

"No, indeed; he was as hale a man as you would want to see. He stood at least an inch taller'n me, an' it was nip an' tuck for thirty year which could throw down; and lately he could throw me every time, which showed that he wasn't losin' his grip very much, for I'm no child myself, as you kin see."

"Yes, I remark that you are a pretty powerful man; and if he could throw you he must have been a giant. And it would seem to me that he must have come to his death by some foul means. Had the old gentleman any enemies that you know of?"

"He never had but one in the world, that I knows of."

"Who was that?"

The old man suddenly changed color and became silent again.

"Must I tell it?" he asked in a pitiful voice.

"You must," replied Thad in a severe tone.

"His son-in-law," responded the old man faintly, and glancing about as nervously as if he considered every word he uttered upon the subject a mortal sin.

"Where is this son-in-law now?"

"I don't know, sir."

"He had some difficulty with the old gentleman, did he?"

"Yes, sir."

"In regard to marrying his daughter?"

"Yes, sir," still nervously.

"The old gentleman was opposed to the match, I presume?"

"No, sir, it wasn't that."

"What was it?"

"There's a long story 'bout it; but I can't tell you. But if ye'll come ter my house, my boy'll tell it to ye."

"When?"

"Now."

"Very well," said Thad. "But tell me before we go how it happens that you are in the house at this time of the evening when you are confessedly afraid of the ghosts?"

"Oh, I come once in a while ter look arter the house, an' I allus comes between seven and twelve at night, as it is never seen or heard at that time."

"Have you ever seen anything yourself?"

"Not I, but my sister sees it often, and she don't mind these things at all."

"Who is your sister?"

"Herme Glowens."

"A tall, dark woman, that dresses in a long robe like a priest?"

"Yes. W'ere did you see 'er?" asked the old man in astonishment.

"I was in the house here when she came this afternoon and saw her enter."

"Did she see you?"

"No, I think not, and for the present I would like to ask you to say nothing to her about it."

"I won't; but how came ye ter think she was my sister?"

"F'om the strong resemblance. Your name is Glowens too, I suppose?"

"Yas, mine's Herman. We're twins, so they called her Herme and me Herman."

"I see. What does your sister say about the ghost?"

"She never says nothin', 'cept that she's seen it."

"Never gave a description of it?"

"No, only once she said it was a young gal, and looked like Phoebe—"

Here the old man checked himself, as if he thought he had told too much.

Thad affected not to notice the break and the half-uttered name, and simply remarked:

"It is all very strange, and I hope we shall be able to clear it up before long. But we had better go, as it is getting late."

The old man made no reply, but led the way out of the house.

CHAPTER V.

HEADY GLOWERS'S STORY.

A WALK of ten or fifteen minutes among the dark, narrow, dirty streets of the extreme west side of the city brought Thad and his companion to the dwelling place of the latter.

It was located in a dingy tenement and several stories up.

"This is only temporary," remarked Glowens, as they started to ascend the dirty, rickety stairs. "We had ter go summers w'en the folks broke up yonder, an' moved in here 'cause it was cheap; but it goes ag'in' the grain fer me an' the ole woman, as was allus used to big, airy rooms, to be cooped up in sich a place. An' as fer Heady—that's my youngest boy, the one as is with us—it nearly breaks his heart 'cause he hain't got his big library to run to right along. He's a great reader, is Heady."

"Why do you call him Heady?" asked Thad.

"It cannot be possible that that is his name."

"No, sir; that is not his name," remarked the old man. "His right name is Edward, and we called him Eddie w'en he was a little feller; an' the master's English footman called him Heddle. So the master, who was a great wag, insisted that that should be his name, because, as he said, the boy was allus readin' an' was all head."

"The old gentleman—Mr. Marlowe—was not fond of reading, then?"

"No, sir. That is, he didn't mind a person readin' a little once in a while; but fer anybody to sit an' read all day long like that young Wallace—"

Here the old man checked himself suddenly, and after mumbling something about the stairs

being "powerful dark," lapsed into silence, which he maintained until he ushered his guest into the little sitting-room of their modest flat.

It was nearly ten o'clock when they reached the old butler's abode, and his old wife had already retired, while his son "Heady" sat with his knees drawn up under his chin and a large book resting upon his knees, within three inches of his eyes, and so deeply engrossed in his subject that he did not notice his father and the detective's entrance.

A minute or so elapsed between the time of their entrance and that of the old man's calling to the young man to introduce him to the detective, and Thad took advantage of the opportunity to study the young student.

His first thought was that the boy had been rightly named, for, while his body was thin and almost emaciated, his head was of enormous size, and his face showed traces of deep thought if not remarkable intellectuality.

The detective could not help wondering how a man with such a grand physique, and so fond of athletics as his father, should allow his son to waste away for want of proper exercise, like a flower deprived of sunshine.

At this point the old man pushed forward a chair and invited the detective to sit down, after which he called to his son.

At first the young man merely grunted a response, and did not deign to raise his head, so that the old man was compelled to repeat the call two or three times.

At length the young man looked up, cast his eyes languidly in the direction of the detective and his father, and finally put down his book and arose to his feet.

As he did not make any move toward joining his father, but stood staring dreamily and abstractedly at the two men, as one often looks at an object without seeing it, the old man somewhat impatiently called out to him:

"Air ye comin' here, Heady, or not?"

Without uttering any response, the young man strode wearily across the floor to where Thad and his father were, and put out his hand to the detective.

"This is Mr.—" began the old man; but never having heard Thad's name, stopped.

Before supplying the name, Thad considered an instant, and in that time decided not to give his right name, as in the complications that might grow out of the case, it might be expedient to conceal his identity at times.

So he said:

"Johnson—William Johnson."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Johnson," murmured Heady, dreamily.

He was then about to unceremoniously return to his book, but his father, understanding his peculiarities, and guessing his motive, hastened to intercept him.

"Heady!" cried his father, sternly, "don't go. Mr. Johnson wants to talk to ye."

The young man turned slowly, and gazed inquiringly, and helplessly at the detective.

"What does he want to talk to me about?" he asked suspiciously.

"Mr. Johnson is a detective, my boy, an' wants ter know all 'bout the trouble atween the master and the young gentleman."

A frightened expression came into the young man's face.

"Why, father," he protested, "I thought that was to be kept a secret from the world."

"So it was, my boy, but this is the law, and we can't keep nothin' from the law."

Heady sat down upon the edge of a chair, and although he did not utter a word, showed by the appealing glance he directed at the detective that he was ready to be sacrificed.

"What I want to know," began Thad, "is the cause of the difference between old Mr. Marlowe and his son-in-law—"

"He was not his son-in-law," interrupted the young man.

"I beg your pardon. I understood your father to say that he was the old gentleman's son-in-law."

"No, he was to have been; but they were never married—at least so far as anybody knows."

"Very well, tell me the story, please, in your own way, and I will take the liberty of asking such questions as I may see fit."

"Shall I begin at the first of it?"

"Yes, tell me the whole story."

"Well, the first part of it I only know from hearsay. The latter part I know from observation."

"I understand."

"Commodore Marlowe, the last of the old family of Marlowes, that trace their ancestry back to William of Normandy, had but one heir, a beautiful daughter, named Phoebe. There were two sons, but they died in infancy."

"While the daughter was still an infant the old gentleman, then a middle-aged man, had abandoned all hope of having a male heir."

"About this time his housekeeper's husband died, leaving her with an infant son."

"It appears that it was a handsome child, and, strangely enough, bore some slight resemblance to the Marlowes, and the old gentleman proposed to adopt the child and rear it as his own."

"The mother, knowing the advantages it would derive from being the adopted son of so wealthy and generous a man, agreed to the proposition."

"It was a part of the agreement that the mother should have an allowance as long as she lived, and the child was never to know who his real mother was."

"Everything went well for a long time. The boy grew to be an extremely handsome man, and the old gentleman was excessively fond and proud of him. Indeed, I doubt if he could have thought more of him if he had been his own son."

"But when the young man, whose name was Wallace, arrived at his majority, he suddenly developed a headstrong disposition, which was the bane of the old gentleman."

"One thing in particular that galled the old gentleman, was the passionate love that Wallace had for books, when he desired to make a gymnast of him."

"This caused a great many angry discussions between the two, but so great was the love of the old gentleman for his foster-son, that an hour after the most violent quarrel, he was ready to eat him up."

"Mr. Marlowe's sole ambition in life, especially toward the latter end of it, was to marry Wallace to his daughter Phoebe."

"For a long time he was in a quandary how to bring the matter about, as it would be necessary to reveal to the young man his true identity, in order that he should not think his father wanted him to marry his sister, and yet the old gentleman desired that he should still retain the name of Marlowe."

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"Finally he hit upon an expedient that seemed a solution to the problem."

"It was agreed that his daughter should be told that she was not his daughter, and that she, instead of Wallace, was the offspring of the Sinclair woman."

"The plan appeared to be operating harmoniously."

"The young people took kindly to each other, and the date of their wedding had already been fixed, when an unfortunate circumstance occurred which spoiled everything."

"It was the death of the Sinclair woman, Wallace's real mother."

"Unknown to the old gentleman or any of the household, she managed to call him to her bedside just before she died, and there revealed to him the fraud which was being practiced upon him."

"The young man, who was the soul of honor, was horrified and incensed at the imposition, and seeking his foster-father, denounced him in the most unmeasured terms."

"The old gentleman tried to mollify his feelings by explaining that it was all done for his (the young man's) good; but he would hear to nothing."

"At first he grew morose, and would go about for days at a time without speaking to any one. Father, wake up."

This remark was called forth by the fact that the old man had gone to sleep in his chair, and was at that moment snoring so lustily that it was difficult for Heady to make himself heard."

"At length, however," resumed the young man, "Wallace suddenly changed his tactics, and became so dissipated that the family were continually shocked at his conduct."

"This caused many stormy scenes between him and his foster-father, and ultimated in such a rupture that the old gentleman disinherited him and swore that he should never marry his daughter."

"The old gentleman, of course, did not mean a word of it, and an hour afterward sought the young man for the purpose of making it up with him; but the young man was nowhere to be found."

"Did he never see him again?" asked the detective.

"Never."

"Nor heard from him?"

"Yes, he heard from him once. He wrote a very bitter letter, recounting all his wrongs and abusing the old gentleman shamefully."

"Where was he then?"

"In France."

"And he has never, to your knowledge, returned to this country?"

"No, sir."

"How did the young lady, his affianced bride, take it?"

"I was just coming to that. As soon as Wallace disappeared she became despondent, and after a short time also disappeared."

"Followed Wallace, I suppose?"

"That is what everybody supposed; but it was not true. We had positive proof that she committed suicide. Her body was found in Lake Ontario."

"Might not there be some mistake about it?"

"No, there were papers found on the body which fully identified her."

"Was the body brought on here?"

"No, sir; the old gentleman went on, satisfied himself that it was his daughter, and had her buried in Canada, where he had some relatives interred."

"Why did he not have her brought on here?"

"Because he did not want to face the scandal. Everybody about here that knows anything about the family at all, thinks that the young lady is abroad somewhere."

"How long have these strange sounds and apparitions been heard and seen in the house?"

"About a year, now; they began a little while after Miss Phoebe was drowned."

"Have you ever seen or heard them?"

"I have heard the scream, but I never saw anything. My aunt, who was the housekeeper, has seen the ghost, as they call it."

"And did she say that it resembled the young lady who was drowned?"

"Yes, sir. There is no doubt that it is she."

"When did the family decide to vacate the old house?"

"Soon after the old gentleman died. They wanted to long before, but he would never hear to it."

"There was something very mysterious about his death, was there not?"

"Well, I do not know about there being anything mysterious about it. He died suddenly, and the doctors could never tell exactly what was the matter with him. But there is nothing strange about that. They rarely ever know what a patient dies of."

CHAPTER VI.

AN ASTOUNDING REVELATION.

THAD was thoughtful for a time after the young man ceased speaking.

A dozen theories suggested themselves to him.

Two ideas kept uppermost in his mind, however.

One was that the foster-son had returned and made away with the old gentleman, and the other was that the woman, Herme Glowres had some mysterious connection with it.

The latter grew so strong at last, that he could not refrain from asking:

"Where does this aunt of yours live?"

Thad did not know whether it was from surprise or that there was a something hidden behind it, as he had imagined, but the young man suddenly became greatly agitated, changed color, and finally arose and awoke his father, without answering the question.

And as soon as his father was sufficiently awake to talk, the young man slipped away so unceremoniously that the detective had no opportunity to ask him another very important question, and that was, where did the Marlowe family reside at present.

This question he propounded to the old butler later, and also asked him where the aunt lived; but he dismissed the subject with the convenient "I don't know."

Thad, seeing that he had got all out of these people that he was likely to get, soon afterward took his leave.

As he made his way toward his rooms, or studio as he called them, the detective formulated his plans for the future.

The first thing to be done was to discover, if possible, some trace of this foster-son, Wallace Sinclair, and at the same time to keep his eye upon the woman, Herme Glowres.

As he ran over the strange incidents of the past few hours, one occurrence recurred to him that startled the detective at first.

It was the action of the mysterious Herme Glowres in opening the cabinet and taking a paper from it.

What was the nature of the paper, and what had she, a housekeeper, to do with the family documents?

This bore out his original theory that she was in some way concerned in the mysterious plot (which he now believed it all amounted to) which was producing all these so-called ghosts, and which, in all likelihood, had carried the old gentleman out of the world.

First of all, then, he must find this woman and gain possession of that document.

But it would be almost as easy to find a trace of Wallace Sinclair as it would to find her, now that her relatives knew the detective was inquiring for her.

However, he decided to bide his time and watch the course of events.

There was little sleep for the detective that night, and he was up early the next morning, and at work upon the few slender threads of evidence he had secured so far.

One of the strangest things he encountered was the fact that all his inquiries in the neighborhood regarding the present whereabouts of old Mrs. Marlowe failed to produce any light upon the subject. Every one inquired of had the same mysterious shake of the head and the same negative reply.

Shortly after noon he again visited the old house, entering this time through the secret passage which he had discovered the previous day.

His first action after getting into the house again was to open the cabinet from which he had seen the woman abstract the papers, and search for other documents.

He found documents in abundance, but not one that threw any light upon the subject in hand.

Thad next visited the library where he and the old butler had had their first talk, and made a search of that apartment.

But after an hour or more spent in this occupa-

tion, he was compelled to abandon the idea of discovering anything of service to him.

Having now exhausted his resources in this direction, he decided to remain in the house until the time at which Herme Glowres had arrived on the previous day, with the hope of seeing her again.

But the afternoon passed and darkness came, and still she did not put in an appearance.

And what was stranger still, the detective heard no screams nor did he see the mysterious beauty either in the niche or the bedroom.

This impressed him more forcibly than ever that there was some trickery about the whole affair, and that the perpetrators, knowing that the detective was watching them, had refrained from carrying on their performance on this particular day.

And thus the day and a good part of the night passed and no new discoveries had been made.

Thad returned to his apartments about midnight, a little more despondent and less hopeful of success than he had left them that morning.

Nor was this the worst of it.

A week went by with the same result.

The greater part of each day and half the night were spent in and about the old house, and in all that time neither the mysterious woman nor the so-called ghost ever appeared.

Thad was growing discouraged, and was on the point of reporting failure to the inspector, a thing he had never done before in all his career as a detective, when, on the seventh day, late in the afternoon, something occurred to revive his hopes.

He was standing at the window of the room in which he had first seen Herme Glowres, watching, as he had done for seven successive days, for the arrival of the mysterious woman's carriage, when suddenly he was thrown into a state little short of transport by the carriage driving up to the gate just as he had seen it on the first occasion.

There could be no question about it.

The same horses, the identical driver muffled to the eyes, and everything the same.

But his rapture was changed to chagrin a moment later when, instead of the woman, two men alighted.

The men proceeded at once to the house, and one of them unlocked the door, after which they entered the house.

Thad concealed himself behind the same *portiere* which had furnished a hiding-place when the woman came into the room, and waited for developments.

As he anticipated, they came directly up to the room in which the detective was concealed, and proceeded directly to the cabinet.

Thad now had an excellent opportunity of reviewing the two men, as they stood before the cabinet.

One was a tall, stoop-shouldered man, probably forty-five years of age, with light-brown hair full tawny beard, and blue eyes. The other was a short, thick-set man, with fiery red hair and beard and a florid complexion.

The tall one, who appeared to be a thoughtful, cold, methodical man, produced a bunch of keys from which he selected one and unlocked the first drawer of the cabinet.

The two men took all the papers therefrom and examined them carefully, after which they returned them to the drawer and the tall man closed and locked it.

This was repeated with each drawer in succession, and during the whole time scarcely a word passed between them.

When the last drawer had been examined, however, the short man turned to the other one and said:

"Now are you satisfied, Mac?"

"I am satisfied that there is nothing more here," growled the tall man; "but that does not prove that the fellow hasn't documents with him that will, if exhibited against ours, upset our case completely. It is hardly to be expected that he was fool enough to go away without something by which to establish his identity, if he ever had occasion to do it."

"Just your pessimism, Mac," declared the short man, in a high key. "I tell you, we have the best case that anybody could wish. The documents we have show the young man to be the only heir to the property, and the only contradictory document extant—the old gentleman's article of disinheritance, which, by the way, has never been recorded—we also have. So all we have got to do is to keep our eye upon the real Wallace Sinclair, see that he does not discover our plot in time to frustrate it, and coach our claimant properly."

"That is all very fine; but are you sure that we have located the real Wallace Sinclair?"

"There isn't a shadow of a doubt of it."

"Then why not give the Tiger an opportunity to earn an honest dollar, as he suggested last night, Bagley?"

"That wouldn't be a bad idea in case of emergency," responded Bagley, with a chuckle. "But as a general thing I object to spilling blood as long as it can be avoided."

"Oh, well, so am I, so far as that goes," said the tall man, dryly. "But it wouldn't be a bad plan to see the Tiger and have him get himself in readiness."

"Very well, you may look after that part of it; I will have my hands full for a day or two."

"Yes, I will attend to it, if you can tell me where he lives. I will go there to-night."

"Let me see," mused the short man. "I did know where he lives. Somewhere on Catherine street I know. I'll tell you: look in the Directory for Paul Humphrey, Artist."

"Artist is good!" ejaculated the tall man with something approaching a smile showing itself in his usually melancholy face. "The Directory does not mention what kind of an artist he is, I presume."

"No, it is deficient in that respect."

"Now, there is another matter to be taken into consideration," resumed the tall man, after a long pause.

"What is that?" asked Bagley.

"I understand that the woman who nursed the old gentleman has returned to the city. She has been seen by two people of my acquaintance. She must be looked after, and if necessary, sent away somewhere until this matter is fixed up."

"Why not turn her over to the Tiger also?" demanded Bagley.

"Good God!" ejaculated the tall man with a shudder. "Let us have no more blood. One is enough."

"Suit yourself in that matter. But she has got to be kept out of sight for the present, and in my opinion it would be better to make a permanent job of it while we are at it, and the Tiger would ask for no better fun."

"Very well, then, I'll tell him to have a lookout for her too. She is the only one that knows anything about the matter, isn't she?"

"Yes, besides the young man and ourselves."

"Glowres, you mean?"

"Yes."

"And there is no danger of him?"

"Well, hardly," laughed Bagley, "when he is as deep in the mud as we are in the mire. If anybody hangs for this business it will be that man, and don't you forget it."

"I guess you are right," admitted the tall man. "But we had better be going, as I understand there has been a detective prying about here, and if he should happen in and overhear some of our conversation, it would be a little unpleasant for us."

The two men then left the room, and as Thad heard their footsteps descending the stairway, he lost no time in making his way into the back bedroom, and thence into the secret passage, so that he was on the street almost as soon as they.

As they entered the carriage the detective looked about and secured a cab, in which he followed them.

He hoped that they would drive to the abode of the woman, Herme Glowres; but in this he was disappointed, for when they reached Broadway they turned down-town.

The detective followed on, and after ten minutes' ride, saw the carriage ahead of him turn toward the Tombs Prison.

When it reached Center street, the carriage stopped in front of a large building occupied by an army of police lawyers, and also a police publication or two, and the two men alighted and ascended the stairs, after which the carriage turned and drove up-town.

Thad sprung out, ran up the stairs after them, until he saw them enter a door over which hung the sign:

MC COY & BAGLEY,

Attorneys and Counselors-at-law.

And when he had taken due note of the place, so that he would recognize it again, the detective descended the stairs, jumped into the cab and put off after the receding carriage.

CHAPTER VII.

A GHASTLY CONTRACT.

THE carriage which Thad was pursuing had got considerable start before he returned to the cab, but guessing which way it would go, he bade the driver lay on the lash without stint, and before the carriage had got fairly started up Broadway, he overtook it.

Had the driver of the carriage suspected that he was being followed by a detective, he would doubtless have driven more rapidly. As it was, he made pretty good time, so much so that the cab-driver kept up a continual grumbling that he should have to drive so fast.

"Keep him in sight!" urged the detective, "and if you kill a horse, I'll buy you a better one."

With that assurance, the cabby whopped up at a good rate, and Thad had no trouble keeping the carriage in sight.

On up Broadway continued the carriage, until the detective began to conclude that it would never stop short of Harlem Bridge. But at Sixty-third street it suddenly turned west, traveled in that direction a couple of blocks, and stopped at a livery stable.

The detective was disgusted, but not entirely disheartened, and dismounting, he approached the driver of the carriage.

Detective Burr's Spirit Chase.

"Whose carriage is this?" he demanded.
"It belongs to the stable here," replied the driver, coolly.
"Don't lie to me!" roared the detective. "I am an officer of the law, and will make it hot for you if you do not tell me the truth."
"I am telling you the truth," growled the driver rather ill-naturedly. "Still if you do not believe me, you are at liberty to ask the proprietor."
"Well, then, tell me who the men were whom you just drove to the house in Greenwich Village, and afterward to their office on Center street."
"You know as much about them as I do, sir. They employed me to drive them to the places you have just mentioned, and I didn't ask no questions. It ain't my business."
Thad was a trifle taken aback, but he was far from being ready to give up the fight.
"Who is the tall woman whom you are in the habit of driving?" he inquired.
"Indeed, I couldn't say. You see, I drive so many—"
"Hold on!" interrupted the detective. "You can make no mistake in this case, neither can you have forgotten the woman. You won't see one like her in a year—no, not in a lifetime. Six feet tall, dark as an Indian, and dresses like a priest; and what is more remarkable, you yourself were muffled to the eyes so that you could not be recognized by your best friend. Do you not recall the incident now?"
"I am sorry to say that I don't," returned the driver, as coolly as though he had been uttering a gospel truth instead of the most barefaced lies it had ever been the detective's lot to hear.
Thad almost lost his patience at this piece of brazen, but with an effort he smothered his anger, and asked:
"Do you mean to tell me that you do not remember driving a tall lady such as I have described, to a house in Greenwich village, every day at a certain hour for weeks together? And do you mean to tell me that you do not know that it was to that same house that you drove the two men this afternoon?"
"The house I drove to this afternoon was as strange to me as any house to which I had never drove in my life."
"Then you deny having driven the woman I have described there at all?"
"I do."
"Well, when I give out my grand prize to the biggest liar on earth, my good man, you will get it, without a doubt."
"Oh, well, if you doubt my word," remarked the fellow carelessly, "you can ask the boss."
"I guess the only way to deal with you, my good fellow, will be to take you to Police Headquarters. Perhaps they can induce you to tell the truth."
"Do as you like about that," replied the fellow as coolly as before. "If you are not willing to take my word or that of my employers, you will have to arrest me, I suppose."
This bold face had its effect even upon the detective, who began to think that perhaps he might be mistaken after all.
Now that he came to think of it, he remembered that he had never seen the driver's face, and therefore was liable to be mistaken.
He pondered over the matter for some minutes, and finally decided not to arrest the driver, but determined to keep his eye upon him in the event of his appearing in front of the house again.
Again he was compelled to return homeward like an unlucky hunter, without game.
He did not remain home long, however, for he had more work to do ere he slept that night.
First of all, he must find the man designated by Bagley as the Tiger.
Thad remembered the name which the lawyer said would be in the Directory, and he stopped at a drug store and looked up the name and address of Paul Humphrey, Artist, and having secured it and written it upon a card so as not to forget it, he continued on his way to his lodgings on Thirteenth street.
Arrived there, the detective proceeded to make himself up as a thoroughbred East-side tough.
He then left the studio and made his way toward Catherine street, and the abode of the Tiger.
He found the place occupied by the Tiger and his mother, who was known as the Spider, at the top of a dirty, swarming tenement of the lowest order.
Thad was fortunate enough to reach the place ahead of McCoy, and found the Tiger and his mother both in a tolerably comfortable state of intoxication.
The old woman staggered to the door in response to the detective's knock, and as soon as she saw who was there, thinking it was a tramp of course, was about to close the door in his face, when Thad intercepted the action by saying:
"I want ter see Tiger, see?"
The old hag paused and stared at him for a moment, and finally asked:
"What d'ye want see him fer?"
"Cause I do, see?" retorted the detective, gruffly.
The old woman made no more comment, but went away grumbling to herself, and pretty soon the Tiger came staggering to the door.

He eyed the detective from head to foot and growled:
"Wal, what is it, me cherub?"
"Lemine come inside, an' I'll whistle," replied Thad.
The Tiger stood aside until he was inside the door, and then suddenly grasping him by the shoulder and wheeling him about, said:
"Wal?"
"D'ye know some lawyers named McCoy & Bagley?" queried the detective.
"I reckon I do," growled Tiger. "Why?"
"Nothin', only I overheard 'em talkin' a while ago, an' they has a job fer you."
"W'at kind of er job?"
Thad simply made a sign indicative of cutting a throat.
"Wal, s'pose they hev? W'at's that ter you, me cherub?"
"Nothin', only I wants a hand in it, that's all."
"An' s'pose I say no?"
"Wal, ye won't say it, see?"
"W'y won't I?"
"Wal, if yer don't tumble," growled the detective, "I'll give yer a tip. Yer ain't no more anxious dan mos' folks ter swing, I reckon? Now d'ye smoke me?"
"I t'ink I do," snarled the Tiger. "Yer means ter say dat if I don't let yer in on de deal, ye'll squeal. Is dat de racket?"
"Yer jis' 'bout hit it."
The Tiger glared at the detective for an instant, drew a long, murderous looking knife from his belt, wiped it upon the leg of his trowsers, licked his lips like a genuine tiger, and growled:
"D'ye know w'at I does wid folks dat tries any little games like dat on me?"
"Nope," returned the detective coolly.
"I eats 'em!"
Thad laughed.
This appeared to infuriate the fellow.
Uttering a low growl and showing his teeth, he made a deadly spring at the detective's throat.
But Thad was too quick for him.
As the murderous knife descended toward his throat the detective clutched the villain's wrist, gave it a sudden wrench that made the fellow howl with pain and the knife to go spinning into the air.
The Tiger was so surprised at the action that he stood for some seconds staring at the detective in stupefied amazement.
Thad repeated his low gurgling laugh, and said:
"An' I eats de Tiger dat eats de man, see? De Tiger ain't in it w'en de Panther's on de war-path, see?"
The ruffian had nothing to say, but snarled in reply:
"I say," continued the detective, "does de Panther come in on de game?"
The Tiger was silent a moment, during which he took an inventory of Thad's gigantic form from head to foot, and finally gave utterance to the single word:
"Yep."
At the same time extending his hand.
Thad shook the dirty fist, and then the ruffian seemed a bit of a sudden to warm toward him.
"I say," he growled, pushing a broken chair toward the detective, "I likes you. Sit down. Ye're the only bloke livin' dat kin do w'at ye done jis' now. W'at's dis dey calls ye?"
"Panther," said Thad.
"A powerful good name. But I say, w'at's dis job yer was a-talkin' 'bout?"
"De coves 'll be here purty soon, an' dey'll let ye inter de whole business."
"Yep. Hark! Dere's sommon, comin' up de stairs now. I say, Panther, jis' you hide back dere in de nex' room while I makes de bargain; an' be ready ter lend a hand in time o' need."
"Ay, ay," returned the detective, and was soon concealed in the darkness of a musty bedroom.
The next moment there was a rap at the door, and an instant later Alfred McCoy, of the law firm of McCoy & Bagley, was ushered into the room.
"Tiger, how are you?" said the lawyer.
"Jis' so so, Mr. McCoy," responded the ruffian.
"Sit down."
"I haven't much time, Tiger. The fact is, I have a little work for you to do."
"Dat's good. W'at's de nacher of it? as de snake said w'en it tried ter swoller a buzz-saw."
"I'll tell you. There is a young man, whose residence is supposed to be at Denver, Colorado, but as a matter of fact, it is at the St. George Hotel, Brooklyn. He is known there as Walter Sinclair, but his right name is—well, no matter what his real name is. The young man is in our way, or is liable to get in our way before long, if he isn't persuaded to go off somewhere for his health. Do you think you can persuade him, Tiger?"
The ruffian walked across the floor to where his knife had fallen, picked it up, wiped it significantly upon his trowsers leg, showed his teeth and muttered:
"Wal, I rudder t'ink I kin."
"Very well. It must be done at once."

"Ter-night?"
"If possible. At all events, don't let it go more than a day or two."
"Nope."
"Now, there is another job I want you to attend to. It is a woman in this case."
"Uh!" grunted the Tiger. "I don't likes throttl'n women. It looks bad. 'Sides, dere ain't no fun in it. I likes killin' men. It's excitin' like. But everything goes. W'ere's de woman?"
"That I am not able to tell just yet. We have not been able to locate her yet; but I will probably be able to let you know to-morrow some time."
"All right, Mr. McCoy, an' much oblige. Now, w'at's de boodle?"
"The pay?"
"Yep."
"I will be liberal with you this time, Tiger. If you will silence the young man so that he will neither bother us nor his taking off cast any suspicion upon us, we will give you five hundred dollars; and for the woman, as there will not be the trouble to you, two hundred and fifty."
"Tain't enough. Make it a t'ousand for de two, an' I'm yer huckleberry."

CHAPTER VIII.

A TIMELY WARNING.

THE lawyer became silent and morose at the ruffian's rejection of his "liberal" offer, as he called it.
He sat for some time pensively knitting his brows, and occasionally clearing his throat in an irritated manner.
At length he broke the silence.
"You are very unreasonable, Tiger. What is the occasion of your sudden increase in price?"
"Wal, I has several reasons," responded the ruffian with a lofty air. "In de firs' place, I've got a pal now, an' I has ter whack up wid him. An' den, I wants ter put away a pile an' retire arter 'while an' enjoy meself like de rest o' de rich blokes."
Again the lawyer was silent.
But after a long time, he resumed, and he appeared to be in better spirits this time.
"Very well, then, Tiger. A thousand dollars it is. But mind you, both jobs must be done in first-class style."
"To de queen's taste, as de cove said w'en he mixed up de dose o' p'izen fer her Majesty."
"No bungling, so that there will be suspicion thrown upon us."
"Nope."
"Very well. I will depend upon you."
And the lawyer arose to depart.
"I say?" growled the Tiger, putting out his hand.
"Well?" said the lawyer, apparently not understanding him.
"Antie."
"What?"
"Divvy. Come down."
"What, in advance?"
"Good faith, see? I never undertakes a job widout a deposit ter pay for material!"
The lawyer hesitated a moment, glowered at the Tiger; but seeing that the latter was firm, finally pulled out a roll of bills and handed them to him, with the remark:
"There is two hundred. Now, don't trouble me any more till the job is completed."
"Thankee, sir. I won't murmur."
The lawyer then departed and the ruffian called to Thad to come forth from his concealment.
"I've got it all fixed," said Tiger, as soon as the detective came out. "An' here's your share o' de boodle," he went on, handing Thad half the money.
"No, t'anks," replied the detective, spurning the proffered spoil from him.
"W'at, go back on de sugar?"
"W'en de work's done I'll take me share. Till den, you kin keep w'at ye've got."
"Jis' as you say," remarked the ruffian, pocketing the money. "But say, you're a queer one, you are. I've run up ag'in' a many a rum customer, but you takes de bun, me cherub."
"Never mind me. W'en's de job to be done?"
"W'y, de bloke wants it done ter-night; but I reckon I'm a leetle too meller ter undertake a task like dat dis evenin'."
"I'll tell ye w'at do den."
"Wal?"
"W'ere's de man located?"
"St. George's Hotel, Brooklyn."
"All right. S'pose ye let me go over an' reconnoiter, an' git de cove out if I kin, an' you meet us near de bridge."
"I'll do it," exclaimed the ruffian. "De walk across de bridge'll sober me enough to do me work."
"An' if I can't git 'im out?"
The Tiger got up and staggered across the room, and soon returned with a small vial.
Handing it to the detective, he growled:
"Ef ye can't git 'im ter leave de house, mebbey he'll take er drink wid yer or smoke er cigar. A drop o' dat in de liquor or on de cigar'll fix his flint."

"Good 'nuff," responded the detective, putting the vial into his pocket. "It's now arter twelve. I'll hev ter be moseyin' or de cove'll be ter bed. You lie down an' hev de ole woman wake yer in about a hour, see? Dat'll give me plenty time ter do de job or get de game out."

"Say?" suddenly exclaimed the ruffian.

"Wal?"

"I hev an idea."

"W'at is it?"

"Kin yer write?"

"Yep."

"Good?"

"Fu'st-class."

"Good! Now, here's de plan fer gittin' de young rooster out o' de house."

"How?"

"W'y, jist write 'im a note f'om some o' his relations, if yer knows any; an' if yer don't, f'om his mudder. Say she's a-dyin', an' dat she wants er last farewell kiss, see?"

"You're a cute one, Tiger," ejaculated the detective. "Gimme a scrap o' paper an' a pencil."

The articles were supplied, and Thad wrote the alleged note, which caused the Tiger to go into convulsions of laughter when he read it to him.

Thad then took his leave of the ruffian.

As soon as he reached the street, he called a hack which happened to be passing, and had himself driven quickly to his own lodgings, instructing the driver to wait for him.

In ten minutes after he entered his studio, the detective came forth again in his own proper person.

"Now to Brooklyn, as fast as you can drive!" was his command to the coachman, as he entered the carriage.

So well were his orders obeyed that in less than half an hour after they were given he was at the St. George Hotel.

A hasty glance over the Register revealed the fact that Walter Sinclair was stopping at the house, and the detective sent up his card.

In a few minutes the bell-boy returned, with the information that the young man was indisposed, had retired, and would not see anybody that night.

Thad penciled a few lines upon a card and sent it up to the young gentleman.

A few minutes later the bell-boy returned, with the information that Mr. Sinclair would see the gentleman for a very few minutes.

With that the detective stepped into the elevator with the bell-boy, and was soon hoisted up to the fifth floor, where young Sinclair's room was located.

Walter Sinclair was lying in bed, smoking a cigar, when the detective entered.

He glanced up languidly as Thad approached the bedside, and then referring to the card which he had sent up, said, in a weary tone:

"This is Mr. Burr, I believe?"

"The same," replied the detective. "And I believe I have the honor of addressing Mr. Wallace Marlowe, otherwise known as Walter Sinclair, have I not?"

Without replying the young man sprang up in bed, and bent a fiery gaze, half-angry, half-puzzled, at the detective.

"Pray, do not get excited," admonished Thad, in a gentle voice, quietly seating himself. "Being a detective, I am supposed to know things entirely unknown to other people. First of all, I want you to know that I am a friend."

This still did not satisfy the young man, who regarded the detective suspiciously.

"What do you want?" he finally asked.

"Simply to warn you of your peril, to begin with; and when that is done, learn a few facts from you which I can obtain no place else."

"What do you mean? What peril am I in?" he inquired, still incredulously.

"I will tell you. You are the sole heir of the estate of the late Commodore Marlowe."

"The late Commodore Marlowe?" exclaimed the young gentleman in surprise. "You do not mean to say that the old gentleman is dead?"

"Certainly. Been dead a month or more. Haven't you heard of it?"

"This is the first."

"Where have you been, in mercy's name?"

"In the mountains until three days ago. But how came the old gentleman to die?"

"I do not know the cause of death. Nobody seems to know. I hope to before I get through with this case, however. But we can talk of that at some other time. My business concerns yourself at present."

"Go on," said Sinclair, settling down comfortably in bed, and pulling away at his cigar.

"As I started to say," resumed the detective, "you are the sole heir of the estate of Mr. Marlowe, and taking advantage of your long absence—"

"Only a year."

"At all events, taking advantage of your absence, a firm of unprincipled lawyers have a scheme on foot to defraud you out of your rights."

Sinclair laughed.

"My dear sir," he began, "it is very kind of you to come at this time of night to tell me all this; but allow me to tell you one thing. Your

firm of unscrupulous lawyers, nor anybody else can ever defraud me out of a penny's worth of that estate, for the simple reason that I have no more interest in it than you have."

"You do not understand, my dear boy. I know all about the article of disinheritance; but that, as well as the will of the old gentleman, is in these people's hands."

"Then what?"

"They have provided a false heir, who is to pose as yourself, and as the article of disinheritance has never been recorded, and the article itself has doubtless been destroyed ere this, it will be an easy matter for them to establish his right to the property, and the lot of the swindlers will divide the spoils to suit themselves."

"And that they may enjoy it to their hearts' content, is my humble prayer."

The detective could not understand this lethargy.

What could it mean?

Was this fellow in reality so careless of his own interests?

Was this affected, or was there something behind it all?

"Very well," continued the detective. "That you are willing to allow your rightful inheritance go to the dogs without raising a hand to prevent it, is no concern of mine. But, there is another matter that will possibly claim your attention."

"What is that? That they are talking of murdering me to get me out of the way?"

"That is it exactly."

The young man laughed heartily.

"My dear fellow, I cannot imagine what you expect to gain by all this nonsense—"

"Stop!" cried the detective, jumping to his feet. "I have borne with your insolence long enough. As my card shows you, I am a staff detective, detailed by the proper authorities to work upon this case, and they are, in a measure, responsible for my actions. In the course of my work I accidentally overheard these lawyers planning your death. More than that, I went in disguise to the house of the assassin who is hired to do the job, and agreed with him to come here and lure you out so that we could murder you. Now do you believe me? Now do you imagine me to be a schemer, trying to worm into your confidence and make a few dollars?"

The young man's whole attitude underwent a complete change.

The half incredulous, half quizzical expression faded from his face and gave place to a look of sincerity, mingled with alarm.

"Pardon me," he implored. "I now for the first time since you came in realize that you are neither a practical joker nor an impostor. The fact is that ever since I left home after my foster-father disinherited me, I have been bound to death with alleged detectives, claimant-lawyers, and the like until I have learned to distrust everybody who approaches me with a little knowledge of my affairs. I care nothing for the estate, even if I could get it, which is doubtful, unless it would be to restore it to my foster-sister and one-time betrothed, if she still lives. Tell me, Mr. Burr, have you, in the course of your investigations, discovered any trace of the whereabouts of Phoebe Marlowe?"

"She is reported dead, is all that I have learned so far."

"When did she die?" asked the young man in a surprisingly cool tone of voice.

"She was drowned a short time after you left."

"It is a lie! There is not a word of truth in that story, and the people who circulated it knew it to be a lie."

"But her own father went West, identified the body and had it interred there."

"There is no truth in the story, I tell you. If she is dead, she has died within a month."

"Have you seen her within the time?"

"I have."

"How is it that you have lost trace of her, and how is it that you said just now 'if she still lives'?"

"Pardon me, sir, if I ask you to wait a few days before I answer that question."

"Very well. You admit, though, that you do not know whether she is alive or not?"

"Yes, I admit that much."

"Nor where she is?"

"Yes."

"Will you allow me to assist you in discovering?"

"With pleasure, sir," replied the young man warmly, and Thad detected tears in his eyes as he extended his hand and continued. "I wish I could ask you to allow me to be a friend to you, sir."

"It is granted in advance, my dear boy," cried the detective, grasping his hand heartily. "And you will never find a stancher friend than Thad Burr."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart! And now about this fellow who is to assassinate me. Where can we find him? I should enjoy seeing him."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Never more so in my life."

"Very well, get up and dress yourself and we will find him in about ten minutes."

Sinclair wanted no further bidding, and was

soon dressed, and the two men left the hotel and started for the Brooklyn bridge.

CHAPTER IX.

A MUTUAL SURPRISE.

THE night was cool and pleasant, and Thad and Sinclair walked briskly toward the bridge.

Tiger was to post himself near one of the piers, under the bridge, a place which is always extremely dark, so the detective and his young friend walked down Fulton street till they came to the place where the would-be assassin was to stand.

When they reached the spot, they could see the dim outline of a man standing in the shadow.

"That is he," remarked the detective.

"Remain here, then, and I will approach and interview the gentleman," was the surprising proposition of Sinclair.

Thad was dumfounded at the young man's temerity.

"Are you crazy?" he asked.

"On the contrary, I am quite sane," retorted the young man sharply.

"If you insist upon carrying out the proposition you have just made, I shall certainly be inclined to doubt your sanity."

"Why?"

There was something so inane in this question, that it irritated the detective.

For he had spent a greater part of the time required in walking from the St. George Hotel in describing the Tiger, and now for the young man to ask why he should not approach him alone, was almost too much for human endurance.

"Perhaps you will learn the reason why you should not approach that villain alone, when it is too late, especially as he is to get a reward of a thousand dollars for your life."

Sinclair laughed incredulously.

"With all deference to your opinion in the matter, Mr. Burr," he said, coolly, "I am inclined to think you are mistaken in the character of the man, and I am going to have a talk with him."

And before the detective could interpose a protest, the young man strode away toward where the Tiger was standing.

Thad's first impulse was to run after him and bring him back, and his second to call to him, but for some reason he hesitated until it was too late to do either.

The young man walked boldly up to the ruffian, the next instant the detective was surprised to see Sinclair slap Tiger on the back, and an instant later to see the latter turn and grasp the young man's hand and shake it warmly.

The detective did not know what to make of it.

And he was still more astonished when, a moment afterward, the young man returned to him and said that he was going with the Tiger to one of the near-by saloons to get a drink.

"What do you mean?" demanded the detective. "I have just warned you against this man, and now you are going to the very place with him that of all others you should avoid."

"Don't get nervous, Mr. Burr. He won't hurt me. But if you have any fears in the matter, you may come along and watch what I do with him."

Thad was unable to decide whether the fellow was a lunatic or was playing a desperate game of bluff; but he decided to offer no more objection, and so the young man returned to the Tiger, when the latter took his arm, and the two strolled off together.

The detective followed at a respectful distance, and a moment after they entered a saloon and sat at their heels.

When he got inside the two men were at a bar, and to his utter surprise the young man invited him up to take a drink.

For the sake of studying the young man's strange maneuvers, Thad accepted the invitation, when Sinclair introduced him to his new acquaintance, Mr. Paul Humphrey.

The young man kept up a continuous chatter first with Tiger, then with the detective, firing an observation occasionally at the bartender sometimes in English and as frequently in German.

All this time the ruffian was ominously silent, Thad thought, and drank as regularly as he was invited to.

And it was not long before his head began to droop, and not a great while before he staggered across the room to a chair and tumbled into it, and soon began to snore lustily.

Sinclair then turned to the detective and laughingly asked:

"Now, what do you say about your assassin?"

Thad was speechless.

"He doesn't look very dangerous, does he?"

"No," replied the detective dryly. "But what does it all mean, Sinclair?"

"A little case of bluff, that's all. The fellow was taken by surprise when I approached him as I did, and naturally wanted to know who in Texas I was. I told him that I was the spurious Walter Sinclair and that I had come to inform him that the real article was at that moment

pale but interesting corpse. This tickled the brute wonderfully and he forthwith invited me to go have something with him, which invitation I accepted, and the result is that he is now reposing peacefully in his chair, and will so remain, I presume till the barkeeper throws him into the street. Come, let us go. It is after three o'clock."

When they got into the street, Thad asked: "Where shall I find you for the next few days, in case I should want to confer with you?"

"At the same place," he replied.

"Not at the hotel?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Aren't you afraid of these people?"

Sinclair indulged in one of his ringing, musical laughs, which the detective had already learned to like, there was something so hearty and fresh about them.

"No, I am not afraid," he said, carelessly. "Those fellows will never bother me, mark my words."

"My dear young friend," pleaded the detective, "won't you take an old fellow's advice and change your quarters, if only for a few days, until this matter is ferreted out and I get these rascals under lock and key?"

"No, I think not. I am very comfortable where I am, and there is not the slightest cause for alarm. See how I bearded the lion in his den to-night, or the tiger rather, which is the same thing."

"Oh, well, my boy, because you escaped this time is no indication that you will do it again. You fooled the Tiger to-night. To-morrow he will discover his mistake, and the worst of it is, he will know you next time."

"Don't worry about me, old man. You are a great deal older than I am and a detective, but I have knocked about a little and know how to take care of Number 1."

"You won't take my advice, then?"

"I am sorry to say I cannot. I have my reasons for not wishing to run at this stage of the game."

"So be it then. If you get into trouble you know where to come for a friend," continued the detective, handing him a card and extending his hand. "Good-night, my boy."

"Good-night, sir."

As the detective took the car to cross the great bridge, and in fact, all the way back to his lodgings he could not help thinking what a strange creature Sinclair was.

He recalled all the young man had said and all his queer actions. Of his agitation when he mentioned his real name, of his suspicion that the detective was an impostor, and finally his eagerness to meet the Tiger; and his subsequent tricking of the ruffian.

And then all of a sudden it dawned upon him that possibly he was the one that had been humbugged.

Was it possible, he thought, that this was not the real Walter Sinclair? If so, why did the lawyers want to kill him? No, this could not be, and yet there was something very mysterious about it all.

The matter worried him so much that he did not sleep much that night, and early the next morning he was at the hotel in Brooklyn again to see his new-made friend.

It was not more than nine o'clock when he reached the hotel, and yet when he inquired for the young man, the clerk informed him that he was gone out.

"Is your name Burr?" asked the clerk.

"It is," replied the detective.

"Mr. Sinclair left this letter for you," said the clerk, handing out an envelope.

Thad hastened to tear it open, and read the following:

"MR. THADDEUS BURR, Detective:—
DEAR SIR:—Sorry to disappoint you, in case you should call to see me to-day; but on mature reflection I have concluded to take your advice and leave the hotel. It also pains me that I can not give you my present address; but you will not wonder at this when I tell you that I am not the person you took me for, but the spurious claimant whom you were so kind as to tell me about.

"This makes it desirable that I should keep shady from such people as yourself for the present. This will explain to you why the Tiger did not want to kill me last night.

"I am afraid you will think my conduct naughty, but it can not be helped. I am somehow constructed that way.

Farewell.

"WALTER SINCLAIR."

"Did Mr. Sinclair say where he was going?" asked Thad of the clerk.

"No; but he said he would be back this evening."

"In that case he probably lied to you," responded the detective.

"What do you mean?" demanded the clerk sharply.

"Read that letter."

And the detective handed him the young man's note.

When he had finished reading it, the clerk looked rather grave, as he remarked coolly:

"In that case we are out a month's board, that's all."

"Has he been here for a month?"

"Just about."

"Why, he told me that he only arrived three days ago from Colorado."

"Come to think of it, he has been here nearly two months," continued the clerk, consulting a book.

"As you see by the letter," resumed the detective, "he admits that he is not the real Walter Sinclair."

"So I see."

"Now, let me ask you, has there ever been another man by that name stopping here, to your recollection?"

"I do not remember of any."

The detective was nonplused.

If this was the real Walter Sinclair, what could be his motive for denying the fact? And if it was not, how was it that McCoy should have made the mistake? A man of his sagacity ought certainly to keep track of the false claimant whom he was coaching.

And to think that only for the detective, this false claimant would have been murdered by his own friends.

The more Thad thought of it, the more puzzling it became.

But in spite of the fellow's denial, and his various contradictory statements, he could not help but believe that this was the real heir of the estate of Commodore Marlowe.

CHAPTER X.

VAGUE CLUES.

THAD's first move after returning to his apartments, was to make himself up as the ruffian again, in order to pay another visit to the Tiger.

This was his only resource for gaining the desired information in relation to the alleged false claimant.

It was high noon when he arrived at the Tiger's abode on Catherine street, and yet the detective found the gentleman still asleep.

"He had a tough night of it," explained the ruffian's mother, "and the poor boy."

"What time did he get home?" asked the detective.

"Not till eight o'clock this mornin'," replied the old woman.

Nevertheless, Thad had him roused up, and as soon as he was able to talk, began:

"I say, Tiger, where did you go last night?"

"I waited down by de bridge till 'most two o'clock."

"And den where did yer go?"

"A young feller come along an' told me dat you'd fixed de young cove, an' den me an' de young chap went an' hed some drinks togedder."

"Who was dis young chap, Tiger?"

"Blessed if I know. He said he was de rooster w'at McCoy an' Bagley is puttin' up as de real heir o' some property."

"An' yer never seen him afore?"

"Never."

"Sure?"

"Dead sure."

"Look here, Tiger, do you know dat you've been done fer?"

"W'at d'yer mean?"

"Simply dis, dat de young'n yer was drinkin' wid was de same chap as we went over to do up, see?"

"Jerusalem!"

"Dat's w'at."

"An' he ain't killed at all?"

"O' course not. He's left de hotel."

Tiger rubbed his eyes in perplexity.

"Dis is a fine go," he growled.

"I should smile," responded the detective.

"Now, Tiger, are yer sure dat yer never seen er heard o' dat cove afore?"

"Dead sure."

"Didn't yer never know nothin' 'bout de false claimant?"

"Not till de young chap chinned 'bout him last night."

Thad was satisfied that the ruffian was telling the truth, and he felt that at least one point was settled, and that was that the young man, whoever he may have been, was not in league with the Tiger, as he had suspected from his actions the night before.

But this point being settled did not clear up the mystery of who the young man really was.

And as there was little hope of gaining anything in that direction by talking to the Tiger, he abandoned the subject and took up another one.

"By de way, Tiger," he began, "has yer heard anyting from de lawyers 'bout de woman?"

"Yas, here's de letter," said the ruffian, handing the detective a note. "I was jis' waitin' till I got sober 'nuff ter go out an' git de barkeep' at Grogan's ter read it fer me."

Thad found by the note that the woman was at a certain address in Harlem, and made a mental note of it; but he pretended to have a good deal of difficulty in deciphering the note, going over it letter by letter with his pencil, and in the mean time managed to alter the figure in the address so that nobody would know what the original was.

Thad then took his leave of the Tiger, re-

turned to his lodgings, altered his make-up to that of a genteel business man, and took an Elevated train for Harlem.

He had no trouble in finding the number, but as the woman, whose name was Catherine Beech, was stopping with another family, her name was not on the bell, and as a consequence, the detective had some difficulty in locating her.

He was compelled to begin with the lower flat and go on up, inquiring of each family in turn if such a person lived with them.

Finally, when he reached the fourth floor, the woman, in response to his inquiry, looked the detective over critically from head to foot, and at length asked:

"Do you come from the lawyers?"

It did not take Thad long to see through the meaning of this, and he promptly answered:

"From McCoy & Bagley, yes."

"Very well, you may come in."

This could mean but one thing, and that was that the lawyers in question had instructed the woman to see nobody not sent by them.

The detective walked into the sitting-room, which was rather poorly furnished, and the Beech woman soon joined him.

She was a small, nervous woman of probably forty, and looked as though she had had a good deal of trouble, but still retained traces of what had evidently been great beauty.

She regarded the detective rather suspiciously as she sat down, and repeated the question of the woman at the door as to whether he was from McCoy & Bagley's.

Thad assured her that he was, and when she became calm and reassured, he began:

"Now, Mrs. Beech—I presume I am right in calling you Mrs.?"

"Yes, sir; I have been married," she replied; "although I am a widow now."

"What I was about to observe, Mrs. Beech," resumed the detective in a kindly tone, "is that we should understand each other to start with. McCoy & Bagley have ordered you to see no one not coming from them, have they not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any idea why they do not want you to see anybody not connected with themselves?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, coloring and growing confused. "It is because—"

Here she paused and became greatly confused.

"I will tell you why, my dear woman. They are afraid that you will tell something concerning the death of old Commodore Marlowe that would be damaging to their case. Is not that true?"

"Yes," she murmured faintly.

By this time the woman had grown very pale and was so greatly agitated that the detective feared lest she should faint, and hastened to reassure her.

"My dear lady," he said in his gentlest voice, "you have nothing to fear from me. I come to you as a friend, as indeed I am to every one in trouble. Please be calm and hear me out, and I assure you, you will thank me for interceding in your behalf. I feel confident in advance that you are innocent of anything in connection with that murder—"

"Indeed, sir, it was no murder," she interrupted.

"Never mind. We will discuss that part of it some other time. What I was about to say was that while you are innocent of anything except, perhaps, a guilty knowledge; and yet those lawyers are so much afraid that you will divulge what you know in the premises that they first sent you away, and then as soon as they discovered that you had returned they were after you, urging you for the hundredth time to talk to no one upon the subject. Am I not right?"

Instead of answering, she arose to her feet, and preparing to go, said:

"Excuse me, sir. I see that you do not come from my lawyers, and I refuse to speak any further with you upon this or any other subject. Good-day."

"One moment, Mrs. Beech," interposed the detective, rising and stepping in front of her so as to bar her progress. "Hitherto I have acted the part of a friendly adviser, come to warn you of your peril. Please allow me to continue so. Do not force me to assert my authority and take you to the police station, there to be questioned in presence of a vulgar, gaping crowd."

"I will hear nothing more," she declared, excitedly. "Let me pass! You have no right to arrest me! I have done nothing to be arrested for. Let me pass, I say! Help!"

This last demonstration was so unexpected that the detective was disconcerted, and had not had time to pull himself together when the door leading to the adjoining room flew open and a large, rough man sprang into the room.

"What's up here?" demanded the big man in a gruff voice, glancing first at the woman and then at the detective.

"This man is talking of arresting me!" screeched the woman, pointing at Thad.

This was the very thing, of all others, to bring the detective to his senses.

"What's this about arrestin' people?" demanded the big man, with a dark scowl at the detective.

"Simply this," replied Thad, coolly. "This

woman is suspected of a heinous crime, and I have come to find out in advance whether there is any truth in the charge; and if there is not, to prevent the possibility of her arrest, and as she absolutely refuses to answer my questions the only thing left for me is to arrest her, as she will be later anyway."

"By what authority will you arrest her?" demanded the big man, with a threatening look.

Thad handed him his card.

The man glanced at it contemptuously and sneered:

"A detective, eh?"

"Yes, I am proud to say."

"Do you see that door?"

"I do."

"Well, take advantage of it, and git out," roared the big man, in a towering passion.

"Excuse me," returned the detective, coolly, "but I will do nothing of the kind."

"Then I will have to put you out!"

And with that he made a lunge at the detective.

From his extreme size as well as his evident strength, he expected to see Thad sink to the earth; but to his surprise, as well as that of the woman, the detective clutched him by the throat and hurled him to the floor as easily as though he had been a child.

As soon as Thad released the fellow, he sneaked off without a word. But the woman was not so easily satisfied.

Finding herself unrestrained by the detective's engagement with the big man, she darted off in search of a policeman.

So that Thad had scarcely recovered from his tussle with the big man, when two policemen rushed in upon him.

The woman looked on in gleeful expectation and the big man peeped out from his hiding-place with a pleasant anticipation of seeing the detective run in.

But they were both doomed to disappointment.

Thad met the policemen coolly, and when they demanded what was the trouble, he simply handed them his card.

"I see," remarked the leader of the two cops. "A little game of theirs to escape arrest, eh? Shall we take them down?"

"Never mind just now, thank you," replied the detective. "But I will be obliged to you if you will keep within call in case I should want one or both of you."

"All right, Mr. Burr," responded the policeman; and then turning to the woman, he continued:

"It will be better for you if you keep quiet and answer this gentleman's questions."

After which the two policemen took their leave.

The woman then seated herself with a spirit of resignation, and the detective continued his interrogations as though no interruption had taken place.

"First of all, Mrs. Beech," began the detective, "I must tell you that you will have to change your place of residence."

"Why?" she demanded in great consternation.

"Simply because your lawyers, as you are pleased to call them, know where you live at present."

"Well?"

"If you will remember, I told you just before you became too excited to listen to me, that these people were determined that you should reveal nothing that will compromise them. That was why they sent you away, and why they have commanded you to have no intercourse with any one not coming from them. They will not stop at that, Mrs. Beech."

"What do you mean?" she asked in alarm.

"That they intend to assassinate you!"

"What?"

"The man has already been employed, and has received a part of his pay to put you out of the way, and his intention is to put his work through to-night, if possible."

"How do you know this?"

"Being a detective, I take it upon myself to know a great many things that other people never dream of, but which will save the life of a fellow-creature."

CHAPTER XI.

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT AT LAST.

THERE was an earnestness in Thad's words, and the tone in which they were spoken which carried conviction with them.

The woman could not help but believe him.

She was so deeply affected by the realization of her situation that she sunk pale and trembling upon her seat, and for a long time was speechless.

The detective did not break the silence, for the time, preferring to study the woman as she writhed under the agony of fear, conviction, or whatever it was.

Finally she turned a helpless, appealing glance toward the detective's kindly face, and asked:

"What shall I do?"

"The only thing is to keep out of their way for the present," replied the detective. "They

are not satisfied with your promise to keep silent, that I know, and they will undoubtedly attempt to put you out of the way, perhaps this very day. Now, I will volunteer to take you to a place of safety, if you in turn will agree to give me all the information in your possession connected with the death of Commodore Marlowe. This can do you no harm, as you say it was not murder. So you cannot lose anything by telling me the whole story."

The woman was silent for some moments, and it was evident that there was a severe struggle going on in her bosom.

At length she raised her head and said:

"Will I be arrested if there is anything in what I tell that seems to indicate that the old gentleman was murdered?"

"That depends upon whether your statement tends to implicate yourself in the crime. But even if you are arrested, a frank statement, implicating others, especially, if it can be shown that these others were the instigators, will be sufficient to set you at liberty. While if you do not make a statement, and you are arrested upon evidence obtained elsewhere, it will go a great deal harder with you."

"But McCoy & Bagley promised that I should not be arrested if I would refuse to answer anybody's questions."

"I should like to know how they can prevent it."

"I do not know. They claim to have that power."

"You should be convinced of the folly of the statement now that you know that I can arrest you at this very minute if I so desired, and I should like to see them interfere."

"They say that if I should be arrested they would have me released upon a writ of *habeas corpus*."

"Oh, I grant you they might do that; but it would do you no good, as you would be rearrested as soon as the trial came on. But, Mrs. Beech, we waste time. You must make a statement to me, or else I will have to take you to Headquarters."

Again the woman hesitated, but not so long this time.

In a little while she raised her eyes to the detective's face, and he saw that they were filled with tears, as she began:

"Mr. Burr, as you see, I am a poor, friendless, helpless woman; but I am guilty of no crime, and I hope you will do all you can for me in this matter."

"That is what I shall do," rejoined the detective warmly. "If you are innocent, as you say you are, and as I believe in advance you are, you will have no trouble in establishing your innocence."

"I hope so," she said in a doubtful tone. "But the lawyers say that a statement of the facts will convict me."

"This was bluff and nothing else. Believe me, madam, those fellows will tell you anything to carry their point. Please proceed with your statement, and I will tell you frankly whether there is any truth in the claim or not."

At this point a head was thrust in from the adjoining room, and a voice called to the woman.

The latter excused herself and went to the door, where she and the unseen person within entered into a long and heated discussion about something.

Thad could not catch the drift of the conversation, but from the tone of the two voices he knew that the person inside the room was protesting against the woman doing something, which she as firmly insisted upon doing.

The discussion lasted for some time, and the longer it lasted the warmer it grew.

Finally the Beech woman appeared to have triumphed, for the detective heard her adversary say:

"Go on, then, and have your own way, as nobody is to suffer but yourself. But maybe you will remember my words when it is too late."

To which the Beech woman made no reply, but shut the door, and then rejoined the detective.

"I have decided," she explained in a soft, gentle voice, when she was again seated, "to make a statement, Mr. Burr. My sister, with whom I have just been talking, is opposed to it; but there is something about your face as well as the tone of your voice, that inspires me with confidence."

"I thank you, not so much for the compliment, Mrs. Beech, as for the faith which your words show that you have in me. Proceed with your statement, please."

"I am a professional nurse," began the woman, "and about two months ago I saw an advertisement in one of the papers for a discreet nurse, who understood her business."

"I did not understand what was meant by the word discreet in this connection, but I knew that I understood my business as a nurse, and answered the advertisement. I was surprised to find that the person to be nursed was not ill then, but was liable to be, and I was called upon by a young man whom I had never seen before, and have never seen since, but he asked me a great many questions, among others if I could keep a secret. And finally engaged me."

"Of course I was not to go to work at once, but hold myself in readiness."

"It was understood that I was to accept no other engagement in the mean time; but as my salary was to go on just the same as if I was at work, I did not object."

"Is this a usual thing?" interrupted the detective.

"Not very usual; but people of means sometimes do it when they desire a certain nurse, and are willing to pay a few weeks', sometimes several months' salary in order to secure such nurse beyond question."

"Are not such transactions much more common where there is some crime behind it?"

The woman colored, and was silent a moment. Finally she stammered:

"Y-yes, sir, I don't know but they are."

"Did it not occur to you that possibly there might be some criminal action connected with this affair?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because the young man informed me that it was a man who was to be nursed."

"I see. You only look for something criminal where the person to be nursed is a woman, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did not the young man explain why he expected this man to be ill, or did not you demand such explanation?"

"Yes, sir, I asked him why he expected the old gentleman to be ill, and his reply was that the old gentleman was subject to a certain kind of fit which would sooner or later prostrate him, and perhaps carry him off."

"Would you know this young man if you should see him again?"

"Yes, I think I would. Shall I describe him?"

"Not now. Go on with your statement."

"Well, in a month or less from the time that I was engaged I received notification that the position was ready for me."

"This was the first intimation I had of where I was to go, and I was impressed with the grandeur of the place, but more so with the mystery of it."

"Did you ever hear any strange noises?"

"Yes; but I will come to that presently. I found my patient a pretty sick man and the doctor did not appear to know what was the matter with him."

"Who was the doctor?"

"His name was Murtagh."

"The regular family physician?"

"No, sir; he was not sent for. Their excuse was that the family doctor was sick, I believe. Well, the old gentleman grew steadily worse, and finally died."

"I shall never forget the night he passed away. He had been unconscious for several hours. The doctor left about ten o'clock, and said that the patient was sleeping comfortably, and that he would wake up greatly improved."

"I asked him if I should send for him in case the old gentleman grew worse, and he said no, it would be of no use, for if he grew any worse than he was then no human skill could do him any good; that if his present sleep did not cure him, nothing else would."

"The doctor went away and I was left alone with the patient for hours."

"The house was very quiet and the room was very lonely."

"I cannot describe how dreary it was or what a feeling of dread came over me as I sat there in that sick-chamber with its dim light casting its ghostly shadows about the room."

"I had heard some talk of the ghost that sometimes appeared, but had given the story no credit, as I am not superstitious; but now the descriptions I had had of it came back to me and I became so frightened that I did not dare to move. The sound of the rustle of my own garments thrilled me with terror."

"Finally, about twelve o'clock, I should think, I was suddenly startled by seeing a beautiful girl glide into the room as noiselessly as though she had been a spirit of air. She had not opened the door, I am positive, for I am quite sure that I locked it after the doctor went out. Anyway, the beautiful girl glided up to the side of the sick man's bed, knelt and laid her head upon his breast for a minute or two and then arising, kissed his forehead, and said in a soft, musical voice that I shall never forget: 'They have murdered you, papa!' and then glided out of the room as softly as she came in."

"You are sure she did not vanish, as ghosts are generally said to do?"

"No, she went out, but whether she went out the door or not I am unable to say, as I was too badly frightened to notice. At all events, the moment she got outside the room, I was still more startled than I had been at the sight of her, by the most horrible and blood-curdling scream that I ever heard in my life."

"It even aroused the patient from his swoon, and springing up in bed, he cried: 'What was that?'"

"This brought me to my senses in a measure, and I tried to explain what had happened. After hearing me through, the old man laid down again, with the remark, in a weary voice: 'It's

the spirit of my poor Phoebe, and she told the truth. They are murdering me.'

"He lay quiet for a long time, and seemed to be thinking, and at last he turned his face toward me, and I could see that he had changed for the worse. His eyes were almost set in his head and there was a greenish circle forming around his mouth. And he said, in a weak, hollow voice: 'Nurse, I am dying. Don't alarm the family, but run for the doctor—my doctor, I mean—Doctor Blairidge.'

"I waited to hear no more, but hastened from the room, intending to hunt up the doctor in question, although I had no more idea where he was than the man in the moon.

"I went down the stairs several steps at a time, and was outside the front door in no time, but just as I descended the stoop, somebody stepped out of the darkness right in front of me, and asked me where I was going.

"I was so frightened that I could scarcely speak, but I managed to say for the doctor.

"The old gent is worse, then?" said the man, for such it proved to be, although I could not tell who it was. Neither the voice nor the face, what I could see of it in the dim light, were familiar to me. But I answered, 'Yes, dying, I fear.'

"Then go back to him, and I will go for the doctor," rejoined the stranger. 'The bedside is a nurse's place.'

"I offered no further resistance, but merely mentioning that the old gentleman desired that his own family physician should be brought, and hearing the stranger's promise that he would fetch that particular doctor, I darted upstairs again.

"When I returned I found, to my horror, that the old gentleman was already dead, and what was very strange, the various bottles of medicine from which I had been dosing him were all gone, as also was a dish of gruel which I had been feeding the patient."

"Some one must have been in the room in your absence," suggested the detective.

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER DISAPPOINTMENT.

THAD was thoughtful for some moments after the conclusion of the Beech woman's story.

Although it had been straightforward, and bore many evidences of the honesty of the narrator, still the detective could not forget the fact that she had feared to tell the story, lest it should inculcate herself.

This would seem to indicate that the statement just made was in all probability a fabrication, in part, at least, concocted to suit the exigencies of the case, and probably by the cunning lawyers themselves.

After considering the matter for some time, the detective again broke the silence.

"During all this time you never saw the young man again who first engaged you, you say."

"No, sir."

"When did you first see these lawyers, McCoy & Bagley?"

"A day or two after the funeral of the old gentleman."

"Did they come to the house?"

"No, sir. As soon as the old gentleman was buried, the housekeeper told me that there would be no further use for me, and paid me my salary for the time I had been at work. So I came home to my sister's, where I have always lived when not employed, and the next day Mr. Bagley called upon me and said that the family would like to have me go off somewhere, and that if I would, they would continue my salary while I was away. I ask him where I should go, and he said it made no difference to the family where I went, so long as I was out of the State. Well, I have a sister in Kansas City, so I went out there for nearly a month. For about four weeks they sent me my salary regularly, and then it stopped, so I came home. I had only been here a day or two when Mr. McCoy called upon me, and had a long talk.

"Then is when it was that he told me that I must have no conversation with any one upon the subject."

"Well, Mrs. Beech," began the detective, "if you have told me the whole truth, I see no reason for your nervousness. There is nothing in your statement to show that you had anything to do with the murder, if such it was. You knew nothing of the nature of the medicine which you administered to the invalid, did you?"

"No, sir."

"Nor the food given to him?"

"No, sir. That was all prepared in the kitchen and brought up to me ready to be given to the patient."

"There is just one thing that I do not understand," continued the detective.

"What is that, sir?"

"In the early part of our interview I happened to speak of the old gentleman's taking off as murder, and you hastened to correct me by saying that it was not murder. Now, Mrs. Beech, what was the occasion for this statement at that time?"

The woman was evidently taken by surprise.

She had not expected this question.

Growing terribly confused, and turning alternately red and white, she finally managed to stammer:

"At that time, sir, I had no notion of making the statement that I have made, and I merely obeyed the instructions of the lawyers in insisting that it was not murder."

"And yet you knew, or had pretty good reason for believing, that it was murder."

"No, sir, I had no reason to think so, beyond what the young lady had said."

"Did not the deceased's family suspect that something was wrong that the old gentleman died so suddenly?"

"If they did, they never said anything about it."

"Did the doctor for whom the man you met outside the door the night of the old gentleman's death promised to go, arrive?"

"No, sir, not then. I slipped out and went after him some time afterward."

"Did he make no examination?"

"No, sir. He had some talk with the housekeeper, and seemed to be satisfied, and went away."

"That was Mrs. Herme Glowers?"

"Miss Herme Glowers," corrected the woman. "She has never been married, I believe."

"Now, Mrs. Beech, if you did not suspect that there had been foul play, what did you imagine was the motive for sending you away and paying your salary while you were away?"

"I thought nothing more than what the lawyers told me, that while the family was satisfied that the old gentleman came to his death by natural causes, as did everybody else of common sense, there were some cranks who were inclined to doubt the statements of those in a position to know, and these people might make it unpleasant, so they thought, and I quite agreed with them that it would be better for me to go away for a short time."

"But, Mrs. Beech, you must have known that they would not have paid your salary unless they were deeply concerned in getting you out of the way."

"I ought to have known, I suppose, but the plain truth is, I was so worked up over what they told me, that I never so much as stopped to consider the matter, but left at once."

"Well, Mrs. Beech, I will ask you one more question, and then I will leave you. Where does this Herme Glowers live?"

"At Number — Sixty-third street."

"Thank you. Now where does Mrs. Marlowe reside?"

"At the same place, I believe."

"And do you know nothing about the old gentleman's adopted son, that left home something like a year ago?"

"No, sir, except I have heard them speak of him."

"What was the opinion of the family concerning these apparitions or ghosts?"

"They all appeared to consider them genuine, except the old gentleman. He laughed at the idea, said it was all imagination, except on the occasion of which I told you, just previous to his death."

"Now, regarding your safety, Mrs. Beech, you may either go with me to Police Headquarters, where they will provide you with protection, or you may go to my place on Thirteenth street."

After a little thought, she decided to go with the detective, but just at that moment, she was handed a note, which she glanced over hastily, and then excusing herself, left the room.

Thad waited for a long time for her return, but as she failed to come back, he finally arose with the intention of rapping at the door of the adjoining room, and inquiring what had become of her, but as he approached the door in question, he noticed a note on the floor near the door where the woman had gone out.

Something in the appearance of the paper told the detective that it was the same as the woman had just received, and which had called her away. She had evidently dropped it in her haste to get out.

Thad picked the note up, hastily opened it, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR MRS. BEECH:—

"This will introduce to you our dear friend and employee, Mr. Paul Humpfrey, who has a permanent, and lucrative position for you as nurse."

"Don't fail to accept the situation, as it is a good one, and will be permanent for at least a year to come."

Very sincerely,

"McCoy & BAGLEY."

The detective's blood ran cold as he read the note, and without waiting for further information, he sprang out of the door leading into the hall.

But he was too late.

The woman was nowhere to be seen, and was evidently gone with the Tiger.

Thad could not help inwardly cursing the woman for her stupidity, for if his warning had not been enough, the very appearance of the ruffian, he thought, ought to discourage her from going with him without consulting some one.

Then it occurred to him that possibly she had not gone, after all, but was in another part of the house.

This led him to knock at the door at which he was on the point of knocking before.

The lady whom he had first seen at the door, and whom he now recognized as the Beech woman's sister, came to the door.

"Is your sister in here?" he asked.

The woman looked at the detective in surprise.

"Why, no," she answered. "I thought she was in the sitting-room with you."

"So she was up to a few minutes ago, when your daughter, I presume it was, brought her this note," continued the detective, handing the woman the note, "and she went out and has not returned. And what is worse, if I am to judge by the character of the man whom the note introduces, the chances are that unless she is speedily rescued, she never will get back."

By this time the woman had read the note, and looking up, asked with great anxiety:

"What is the character of the man, sir?"

"He is a professional assassin, and has been employed by these lawyers named in the note to murder your sister."

"Why do they want to murder her?" asked the woman, incredulously.

"Because she knows too much about a certain case, of which there is no time to talk now, if we wish to rescue your sister."

And without waiting to explain anything further to the woman, the detective darted down-stairs and into the street.

One of the policemen was there, but he could give Thad no information as to which way they had gone, but assuming that the Tiger would be quite sure to take the woman to his den on Catherine street, the detective secured a hack as quickly as possible and offered the driver double fare to drive him to that unsavory locality as fast as his horse could travel.

The animal made such good time that Thad was in Catherine street in a little over forty minutes from the time of starting, thus beating the Elevated train time nearly ten minutes.

Having arrived at the number at which the Tiger lived, the detective lost no time in dashing up-stairs and knocking at the door.

The old spider in a little more advanced state of intoxication than usual, came to the door.

Without waiting to inquire whether the ruffian was in or not, the daring shadower thrust the old hag aside and bounded into the room.

A hasty glance about showed that the Tiger was not in the front room, and he pushed on through into the next.

To his disappointment, the villain was not there either, and Thad darted into the last room or kitchen.

Still he was disappointed, for there was nobody there!

Then he grew a little nervous.

True, the fellow might have been delayed in some way, and would arrive later; but the chances were, he thought, of his having gone the other way.

Thad almost cursed his own stupidity in not taking a little more time to inquire before bolting off down-town on a wild-goose chase.

Filled with these thoughts, the detective left the house as suddenly as he entered it, much to the surprise and consternation of the Spider, who evidently thought he was a lunatic, from the dazed manner in which she stared at him as he fled down-stairs.

When he reached the street he was in a worse quandary than ever, for he could not decide which way was best to be taken.

In this frame of mind he started off at a rapid pace, without considering which way he was going, and so busy were his thoughts that he had walked a full block before he realized his position, and here he was suddenly brought to himself by the appearance of the Tiger accompanied by Mrs. Beech.

They were walking rapidly, and passed the detective before he regained his self-possession sufficiently to address them, and they evidently did not see him. They were going in the direction of the Tiger's place, and the detective followed, but so rapidly did they proceed that, by the time he had caught up with them they had started to ascend the dirty stairway.

Thad Burr lost no time in hailing the woman by name, and she paused and turned around.

The Tiger also turned and scowled at him, although he evidently did not recognize Thad.

"Don't go up there, if you value your life!" shouted the detective.

But, to his astonishment, instead of heeding him, she sprang up the stairs as rapidly as she could go, closely followed by the Tiger.

Thad made frantic efforts to overtake the ruffian, but to his disappointment, he and the woman both got inside the door before he could come up with them.

And then, just as Thad reached the ruffian's door he was horrified to hear a woman's scream inside!

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

WHEN Thad heard the woman scream he hesitated no longer, but made a dash against the door with all the force that he could muster.

But the door was more stubborn than he imagined.

He jarred the door so that it appeared to almost raise off its hinges, but the latch did not yield.

The detective drew back for a second run at the door, when it suddenly flew open, and the Tiger, with a large knife in one hand and a pistol in the other, appeared.

He glared savagely at Thad, and growled:

"Wat d'yer want hyar?"

Instead of replying, the detective made a sudden spring like a panther, and grasping the ruffian's two wrists at the same time, gave them such a wrench as not only to wrest the weapons from him, but to cause the villain to howl with pain.

Stepping inside and picking up the weapons just released by Tiger, the detective cast his eye about the room in search of the woman, but she was not in sight.

He hastened through into the next room, and there he was horrified to see the woman tied up to a couple of rings in the wall, and the old woman leisurely stripping her of her jewelry and finery.

At sight of the detective Mrs. Beech uttered an exclamation of joy, while the old hag, who was too much stupefied with drink to notice what had been going on in the other room, staggered back and stared at the detective in bewilderment.

Without a word Thad thrust the old woman roughly aside, and at once set about releasing the nurse.

As soon as the Spider got it through her befogged brain what was going on, she made a dash at the detective, and clutched his arm with her sharp, talon-like fingers with such a gripe that she almost brought the blood.

So persistently did she retain her hold that he was compelled to administer a series of sharp blows to her hands before she would release his arm.

Even then she tried to grasp his throat, but seeing that any delicate treatment was a waste of time, he caught the old woman by the throat, hurled her down upon the floor and, after choking her a little, advised her to lie there if she did not wish to be instantly killed.

The Spider was not slow in taking the hint, for she saw or thought she saw that the detective was in terrible earnest.

In the meantime the Tiger had stood like a man paralyzed with fear, and did not dare to make a move toward the defense of his mother, so that Thad was no further molested in the work of releasing the woman.

She did not offer to speak, apparently ashamed of her conduct, and as the detective was never inclined to talk when performing his duty, there was no conversation passed between them until they reached the street.

Tiger offered no opposition as they passed out of the house, merely scowling at the detective and uttering a low growl.

When Thad and his charge reached the street he asked:

"What could you be thinking about, Mrs. Beech, to allow yourself to fall into the clutches of that fiend?"

"I can not tell myself," she replied. "But when I received that note offering me a good position, something told me to accept it, and when I saw you at the foot of the stairs, my only thought was to get away from you, lest you should prevent me from accepting the situation, but the moment I got inside the door, I saw my folly, and wished in my heart that I had gone with you. Then is when you probably heard me utter the scream."

"They had not yet tied you up at that time, then?"

"No, the old woman caught me and dragged me into the middle room, and tied me while the man was guarding the door."

"Well, it is fortunate for you, my good woman, that I happened to be about, or you would have been a dead woman by this time."

"Rather, you should say, if it had not been for your goodness, and bravery, Mr. Burr, in coming all the way from Harlem to rescue me."

"I trust you appreciate the action enough to not allow yourself to get into such a fix again."

"I certainly do. And now, Mr. Burr, if you have no objection, I will accept your invitation to go to your house, where I am sure I shall be safe."

"Very well," replied Thad.

And he took her to his house on Thirty-fourth street.

The detective then returned to his apartments, and removed his disguise, after which he made his way to Sixty-third street, and looked up the residence of old Mrs. Marlowe.

He had no trouble in finding it, one of the splendid mansions in that fashionable street, and when the bell was answered, sent up his card.

The detective was shown into the parlor, and in a short time was joined by a very pretty young lady, who said that she was the niece of the old lady, and that her aunt would be down in a few moments.

He had not long to wait when the aunt came

in. She was a stately, and somewhat haughty appearing old lady, and received the detective with chilling politeness.

"To what am I indebted for this visit, sir?" she asked, stiffly.

"As you see, by my card, madam, I am a detective," rejoined Thad. "And I have been detailed to work upon the case at your late residence. I refer to the mystery, which, as I have been informed, has been the cause of a great deal of annoyance to you and your family."

If Thad had been a mind-reader, and had told the old lady the most innermost thoughts, she could not have looked more surprised than she did at this revelation.

She stared at him in utter amazement for a full minute without uttering a word.

At length she broke the silence with:

"Why, sir, you astound me. I was not aware that anybody outside of my own immediate family knew anything about this matter."

"Very little is known, I admit, outside of your family, Mrs. Marlowe. Enough is known, however, to cause a good deal of scandal in the neighborhood, and it has been reported at Police Headquarters that the house is haunted."

"What progress have you made, sir? Have you discovered anything thus far?"

"Well, yes, madam, I may say that I have discovered a good deal, considering the time I have been at work upon the case. In the first place, I have heard the blood-curdling shrieks in the house, and seen the beautiful girl—"

"Spirit, you mean," interrupted the old lady. "Is the spirit of my daughter who was drowned?"

"I am aware, madam, that such is reported to be the case; but with all deference to those superstitious people who are ever ready to attribute to supernatural causes everything that they cannot understand, I do not believe anything of this ghost story."

"How do you account for the apparition, then, sir?"

"I do not pretend to account for it thus far, but I shall discover a natural cause for it before I get through. By the way, Mrs. Marlowe, have you ever visited the back bedroom on the second floor?"

"Not since the ghost first made its appearance. That was my daughter's bedroom, and the spirit appears to haunt that room more than any other, and as a consequence you could not induce any one of the household to enter that room."

"I have visited the room several times, and although I saw upon one occasion the young lady or her spirit, I suffered no inconvenience or harm."

"You must be a very courageous man," observed the niece. "I would not enter that room for all the gold you could put into it."

"I believe," resumed the detective, "that the house has been in the family for a great many years, has it not?"

"Yes, sir," replied the old lady. "Over a hundred years."

Have there been any eccentric characters in the family, that you are aware of?"

"Yes, sir, there was a great uncle of my husband's who was extremely eccentric."

"What were his peculiarities?"

"Well, I can hardly tell. He had many crotchets. Among them I might mention, however, the building of windmills on the top of the house. It is said that at one time he had the whole roof covered with wheels, so that the police used to have to disperse the crowd of people that would collect in the street to gaze at the odd sight."

"That was a strange freak. Do you recall any others?"

"The most remarkable freak he ever developed, and one that left its trace behind, was the fancy he conceived for constructing tunnels and secret passages about the house. Why, the house is honeycombed with them to this day, although many of them have been filled up of late years."

"That is a point I desire to come at, Mrs. Marlowe. Are you acquainted with the course of any of these secret passages?"

"Some of them."

"Are you aware that there is one which runs from the basement to the room formerly occupied by your daughter?"

An expression of the greatest surprise overspread the lady's face as she answered:

"Indeed, I never dreamed of such a thing."

"And, of course, none of the rest of the family knew of its existence?"

"Certainly not, or I should have heard of it."

"And they or you would have solved the mystery of the ghost long ere this, in all probability."

"What do you mean?"

"That, in my opinion, the ghost is as much flesh and blood as either of us, and it has made its mysterious entrances and exits by way of the various secret passages of which you speak, especially the one running from the basement to your deceased daughter's apartment. Now, allow me to ask you another question, Mrs. Marlowe," continued the detective. "Did this uncle of your husband finally develop any vio-

lent form of insanity, or, what is worse, that horrible disease known as catalepsy?"

"I believe he did. But how did you know all these things, Mr. Burr? I was sure that that no one outside the family knew anything about them."

"As a matter of fact, Mrs. Marlowe, I did not know them. It is for the most part, a theory of mine. Now, has the disease ever appeared among any other members of the family?"

"Not that I know of."

Thad saw that this was a subterfuge.

Like everybody else, her anxiety to conceal the infirmities of her family led her to equivocate.

"Did not your late daughter develop symptoms of the disease?" persisted the detective.

The lady became greatly confused, changed color, stammered, and finally answered:

"I cannot see, sir, in what way prying into the secrets of my family is to advance your case."

"Pardon me, madam, but impertinent as it may appear to you, this is our only means of arriving at the truth in many cases. The only way that the crimes of the wicked are exposed, and the rights of the innocent established. Without your answering my question, I am morally certain that your daughter was afflicted with catalepsy, and that she is as much alive to-day as you or I are."

She jumped to her feet, and advancing to within a yard of the detective, stood staring at him as though he had been some monstrosity.

Finally she asked in a hoarse whisper, scarcely audible to even him:

"Are you mad?"

"I trust not, madam," was the cool rejoinder. "Please calm yourself, Mrs. Marlowe. I have much more to tell you."

The lady moved mechanically back to her seat and sunk into it as though controlled by some unseen power.

"I do not pretend to solve the mystery yet, madam," he resumed. "But I shall. And also the mystery surrounding the death of your husband."

Again she started up.

"What do you mean, sir?" she fairly hissed. "What mystery is there connected with the death of my husband?"

"He was murdered, that is all!"

The lady uttered a groan and sunk back into her chair.

"I knew it, I knew it!" she moaned, and became unconscious.

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISING REVELATIONS.

THE niece ran to her rescue and the lady was soon restored to consciousness.

When she opened her eyes she looked about in a dazed fashion, as if unable to determine where she was.

Finally her wandering eyes fell upon the detective's face, and that appeared to recall her to her full consciousness.

Her chair was located half across the room from that of the detective, and she beckoned to him to come closer.

Thad complied, and moved his chair up closer to hers.

"Now tell me," she whispered hoarsely, "why do you think my husband was murdered, and who was his slayer?"

"My reason for thinking he was murdered is mainly founded upon the statement of the nurse who attended him," rejoined Thad. "But I have other evidence, so strong, in fact, that there is no longer any doubt in my mind that he was foully dealt with. Now, tell me, Mrs. Marlowe, why was it that the regular family physician was not called to attend your late husband?"

"The doctor was too ill at the time."

"Do you know this, or have you only the word of some one else?"

"I have the word of the housekeeper, which I consider tantamount to having seen him myself."

"Might not the housekeeper have been mistaken?"

"Hardly. She went for him herself, I believe."

"This may all be true, Mrs. Marlowe, but it is strange that when the doctor was summoned after the death of your husband, he came at once."

"Indeed? This is the first I have heard of this. The housekeeper informed me that the doctor was too ill to leave the house at the very time of my husband's death."

"Believe me, madam, there is not one word of truth in the statement. The doctor came, and was in the house ten minutes after your husband's death."

"Why did he make no examination?"

"Because he was met by the housekeeper, who told him that the deceased had died of apoplexy, and that it was your request that no examination be made, and he went away satisfied."

"Then my suspicions are verified," cried the old lady frantically. "I have always believed that Herme Glowers murdered my husband, and now I am satisfied of it!"

"What could have been her motive?"

She was silent a long time, during which she sat with her face buried in her hands.

At length she said:

"I do not know how it can benefit your cause for me to expose the disgrace of our family."

"It is out of no spirit of idle curiosity that I desire to know, madam. As a matter of fact, I dislike scandal so heartily that I would gladly shut my ears to all the dirt peculiar to family histories; but it is impossible, if I wish to accomplish anything. The first thing necessary for the conviction of a person, is to find a motive. You believe this woman to be guilty, and so do I; but we can prove nothing without knowing that she had a motive."

"Well, I presume I must tell you the story then; but it is a cruel task. As you may have heard in the course of your investigations, we adopted the son of our housekeeper, Mrs. Sinclair, and brought him up as our own child. Well, my last housekeeper, Herme Glowers, who was my maid at that time, got into trouble about the time that Wallace was born. Herme's child was also a boy and she declared that my husband was the father. He denied it and I never believed the story, but through the circumstance she somehow always wielded a powerful influence over my husband, a thing that no one else could do, for he, like all of his family, was extremely stubborn. But this woman controlled him as though he had been a child, and in fact, she controlled the household, for that matter."

"I should judge that she was that kind of a woman from her appearance," interposed Thad.

"Yes, she is something of a Catherine de Medici," continued the lady, "and has caused me many a heart-ache. Well, when we adopted the son of our housekeeper, Herme was furious. She wanted us to adopt her son instead. But this was one thing in which my husband would not yield to her."

"Years rolled on and the two boys grew to manhood, and strange to say, they were extremely alike, so much so that any one not knowing them would have set them down as brothers."

"But their resemblance was only physical. Mentally they were wholly unlike. Wallace was quiet and studious, while Walter, Herme's son, was wild and boisterous, and cared nothing for books."

"It was my husband's ambition to marry Wallace to our daughter; but in order to do this, and at the same time have him retain the name of Marlowe, it was necessary to assume that Paoebe was not our daughter. This plan would have operated very well, had it not been for Wallace's mother, who died about this time, and revealed the secret of his birth to the boy on her death-bed. He was never the same afterward. He grew morose, and from that to dissipated, and finally a rupture took place between him and my husband that resulted in the boy going away, since when we have never seen him and only heard of him once."

"As you have probably heard of my daughter going away about the same time and of her tragic death, I shall not speak of that. What I desire to mention most particularly is the fact that Herme used her best endeavors at this time to have her son adopted instead of the departed heir. But my husband would not hear to such a thing, having always heartily disliked the young man, and Herme swore vengeance against my husband then."

"What became of her son?" asked the detective.

"He also disappeared about the same time that Wallace did; but came back and was here at the time she put in her plea for him. And then when the scheme fell through with, he again disappeared, and we have heard no more of him."

"I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Marlowe, for your courtesy in detailing to me all this interesting, albeit sad, family history, and I believe I can almost make a plain case out of what I have gleaned so far. One or two more questions, and I am done. Where is this Herme Glowers at present?"

"She sailed for Europe yesterday."

"That is indeed unfortunate," cried the detective, much disappointed. "However, we may be able to trap her later. Do you know anything about the law firm of McCoy & Bagley, Mrs. Marlowe?"

"Yes, sir, they were the attorneys of my husband for several years, but there was some disagreement at last, and latterly he had no dealings with them."

"Which was fortunate for him. I believe that is all I wish to ask at present, Mrs. Marlowe," continued Thad, rising to go. "If any new developments transpire, I will let you know."

"I thank you, sir. I shall be pleased to hear from you at any time. And if you succeed in unraveling this horrid mystery, especially with regard to my daughter, I shall bless you the longest day I live. I wish I could share in your belief that my daughter still lives."

"I do believe it firmly," affirmed the detective, "and I believe that time will prove the truth of my theory."

At that moment the detective's eyes wandered

to the face of the niece, and he was so struck with the resemblance between her and the girl whom he had seen in the bedroom, that he could not help remarking:

"Why, Mrs. Marlowe, how much your niece resembles your dead daughter!"

"Do you think so?" spoke up the niece, blushing deeply.

"Indeed I do," averred the detective. "So much so that if I were to meet you at night in a lonely room, I would almost be willing to swear that you were the alleged ghost."

The girl laughed carelessly, and blushed still more, but made no comment on Thad's remarks.

"Many people have noticed the resemblance," observed the aunt.

Thad then took his leave, believing firmly that he had discovered several keys to the mystery of Ghost Hall.

The following day, after leaving the Marlowe residence he returned at once to his rooms on Thirteenth street, and made himself up as a young dandy, and then made his way across to Brooklyn, and to the St. George Hotel.

Somehow, in spite of what young Sinclair had written him, the detective believed that the young man would return to the hotel, and that is what took him across the river.

And Thad was not mistaken.

When he approached the desk and inquired for Sinclair, the clerk informed him that the young man was in his room.

When the detective reached the room he found Sinclair puzzling over the card which Thad had sent up.

And no wonder. The card read:

MR. LYLE SHARPE,

Palace Hotel,

SAN FRANCISCO.

But when the detective walked into the room, the door of which was open, the young man grasped him as warmly by the hand as though he had known him all his life.

Thad was not surprised at that, as from what he saw of him the evening on which he had first met him he could see that he was a free-and-easy man of the world.

"Sit down," he said, pushing a chair forward, "and help yourself to a cigar," pointing to an open box on the table near by. "I don't smoke myself, but I like to see my friends enjoy a cigar. Let me see," he ran on, without giving the detective an opportunity of getting in a word, "where have I had the pleasure of meeting you before? Not on the steamer coming over from Havre? No, that couldn't have been, I see, it was at the Spa. No, by Jove, I am wrong again. It was at Baden. I remember now. I ran ashore on the red, and you backed me for a cool thousand, and I've never got round to it yet. Never mind, I shall soon be equal to it."

"My dear boy," interposed the detective, "if you owe me a cent I forgive the debt this instant. The fact is, you never saw me at Baden or any place else. I heard of you in 'Frisco, and heard that you were about to come into a snug little fortune, and thought I might make a deal with you in the real estate line, as I am blessed with several thousand acres of land in California and very little of the ready."

"Several thousand acres of land in California, eh? Why, my boy, do you know what that represents to a New Yorker?"

"I haven't the least idea," observed the detective.

"It is just exactly equivalent in his eyes to so many acres of nice elegant blue sky—beautiful to look at, but deuced poor collateral when a fellow is broke. By the way, when were you in 'Frisco, and when did you hear that I was there?"

Remembering what Sinclair had told him the other evening about having arrived from the West only three days before, although he knew from what the clerk had told him that the young fellow had been in the East a great deal longer, the detective concluded to humor this idea and replied:

"Oh, I left there about a week ago, a few days after you did, from what I heard about you."

Sinclair threw back his head and gave vent to one of his peals of boyish laughter.

"That is good!" he ejaculated. "Why, my dear fellow, I never was in San Francisco but once in my life, and then only for a short time—two weeks, I think. And as for having left there a week or so ago, why, I haven't been away from Brooklyn for six months, nor away from this house for two, except for a few days at a time."

This was a surprise to the detective. He had learned to look upon the fellow as a champion liar, from what he had known of him before; but why he should contradict everything he had said before, and without any apparent reason, was a mystery.

After thinking the matter over hastily, Thad set about deliberately to trap him.

"Let me see, were you here at the hotel night before last?"

"The night before last?" mused the young man. "No, certainly not. I was in Philadelphia then. Didn't get back till yesterday."

"Do you mean to say that you did not receive

a detective by the name of Thad Burr, the night before last, and that you went together to meet another party at the bridge?"

The fellow opened his eyes in surprise.

"Why, my dear fellow, I never heard of any such person in my life, and as for going any place in Brooklyn with him, that is absurd, as I was, as I told you, in Philadelphia at the time of which you speak."

Thad was almost stricken dumb with the fellow's cool disregard of the truth, and drawing out the note he had received from the young man, he handed it to him with the inquiry:

"Perhaps you never saw that before, did you?"

Sinclair glanced it over and then handing it back, said:

"Never in my life."

CHAPTER XV.

A HEART-RENDING STORY.

THAD was rendered speechless by the young man's audacity, and after regarding him in silent wonder for a moment, he was on the point of denouncing him as the most unmitigated liar he had ever met, when a circumstance occurred to prevent it.

Just as the detective was about to speak, there came a rap at the door.

Sinclair went to the door, and as soon as he saw who was there, he returned to the detective and whispered softly to him:

"Here is a fellow with whom I must have some talk, and while I don't know you from Adam, I am willing to trust you if you don't mind being a witness to what is said, and will kindly step into that next room," he continued, pointing to his sleeping apartment.

Without a word, Thad complied with the request and passed into the next room, which, luckily, was separated from the sitting-room by *portieres*.

The detective had no more than got into his place of concealment, when Sinclair opened the door and admitted the visitor.

Thad could plainly see him from his place behind the curtain, and was overcome with surprise when he saw who it was.

He was almost inclined to discredit his own vision.

But no, there he was, as plain as day, and if the young man with whom he had just been talking had been out of the way, the detective would have sworn that it was he who had just come in.

In other words, it was Sinclair's double. Or, perhaps it was the real Sinclair, while the one with whom he had been talking was the spurious one.

At all events, the young man who had just entered the room was a perfect image of the one that was there before.

Thad thought he saw a streak of daylight now.

And his mind went rapidly over the events of the past two or three days.

He recalled what Mrs. Marlowe had said about the two boys being so nearly alike, and then of the dissipated nature of the young man he had met the previous evening compared with this one, who would not even smoke a cigar.

It was all plain to him now.

He had been accusing one of the acts of the other.

But what he did not understand was how the clerk of the hotel should confound the two men, and how one should be there at one time and another at another, and the clerk never know the difference.

Did they both go by the name of Sinclair?

All these thoughts flew through the detective's mind in the remarkably short space of time that it took the newly arrived young man to seat himself and begin conversation.

"Well, how are matters progressing?" was the new comer's first question.

And then the detective saw that he was the one whom he had met before.

While there was a striking resemblance in the tone of the voice, this one had a peculiar lazy drawl that was absent in the voice of the other young man.

This he noticed particularly when the other spoke, and he had an opportunity of comparing the two.

"Very little progress has been made," replied the other, "and my opinion is that we had better get rid of those lawyers, Wallace, or we will never accomplish anything."

This name, Wallace, applied to the self--

confessed spurious Walter Sinclair, was another cause for surprise to the detective.

But he was still more surprised a moment later when he heard the spurious Sinclair address the genuine one as Walter.

"I do not know about that," replied the new-comer, whom we shall designate in future as Wallace. "I see no cause for complaint. McCoy & Bagley certainly do not lack cunning."

"Oh, as to their cunning, there is nothing to be said against that. But an attorney in a case like ours should have something besides mere cunning. I do not like their methods."

"In what respect, Walter?"

"Well, in the first place, I do not relish the idea of occupying a false position."

"You're too fastidious altogether, my boy," laughed Wallace. "But seriously, what could you have done in your own character? You were disinherited, and had not a line from the old gent to show that you were any more to him than I or anybody else."

"While I am willing to admit that, I cannot see what assuming your character and allowing you to assume mine, is to avail me."

"You will get half the estate, if the lawyers succeed in their plans."

"Which is better, I presume, than getting all of it."

"How could you have got all of it?"

"By having no partnership business, and the same rascally methods as we are now employing."

"And suppose you had failed?"

"I could have lost no more than I will this way."

"Are you sure about that, my boy?"

"Quite sure. In either case I lose all."

"Just consider a moment," observed Wallace, sitting down upon the arm of the other's chair, and laying his arm affectionately upon his shoulder. "In this case, as you say, if the lawyers do not succeed in their scheme, all is lost. But that is an end of it. But now, supposing you were employing the same rascally methods, as you call them, and were known to the world in your true character—Wallace Sinclair, otherwise, Wallace Marlowe—and the scheme should fail. Then what?"

"Well, what?"

Wallace indulged in one of his musical laughs.

"You cannot guess?"

"No."

"I'll be hanged if I will tell you, then. Suffice it to say, however, that there are prisons for fraudulent schemers in this country, if I mistake not."

"I understand that," said Walter, dryly.

"But do I not run the same risk now?"

"Certainly not. As I have explained to you over and over again, if the scheme should fail, the next thing would be to get out a warrant for the fraudulent claimant, Walter Sinclair. Very well. Now, who is to decide between us who Walter Sinclair is?"

"You may be right, Walter—"

"Walter?"

"Wallace, I mean. But it galls me to be mixed up in a thing of this kind. I wish that I had let the thing go, or else put in my claim in a legitimate way. Is she playing her part all right?"

"To perfection. And you don't want to get down in the mouth at all, for everything will come out right in the end, and you and I will fly high, while you will have a charming little wife in addition to your share of the booty."

"Ah, there is where you touch me in a tender spot, my boy," cried Walter, arousing from his despondent mood. "Only for sweet Ida, I should have resigned long ago."

"I know it, my boy," responded Wallace, with what anybody except the blinded dupe to which it was addressed, could have seen was forced enthusiasm, "and that is the reason that I resigned my claim in that direction, although, as you know, she was the only girl for whom I ever cared a straw."

"Yes, I appreciate your generosity, old fellow, and you shall never hear me complain again, no matter how matters go."

"That is the way to talk it, my boy," cried Wallace, grasping his hand with well-feigned warmth. "And now, I want to tell you what the lawyers have instructed me to tell

you. You are to go to No. 15 Catherine street, and see a party by the name of Humphrey—Paul Humphrey."

"What for?"

"I don't know. He will tell you when you get there."

"When am I to go?"

"To night."

"Why not to-day?"

"The instructions are that you shall go to-night, about ten o'clock; that is all I know about it."

"Another one of their devilish mysterious tricks, I presume," growled Walter.

"Will you go?" asked the other, turning sharply upon him.

Walter was silent a moment, and finally said:

"Yes."

"Very well, I shall depend upon you," rejoined Wallace, grasping his hand again.

"Good-by."

"Good-by, old fellow."

And Wallace took his departure.

As soon as he was gone, Thad came out of his place of concealment and joined the young man.

"Well?" observed Sinclair, did you hear what passed?"

"Every word," replied the detective.

"And what is your inference?"

"That you are the dupe of a conspiracy," responded Thad promptly.

The young man laughed.

"You think so, do you?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then allow me to disabuse your mind, my dear fellow. These fellows imagine they are playing me for a sucker; but the fact is that I have them on the end of my hook."

"What do you mean?"

"Listen and I will explain. As you may have inferred from what you have heard, I am the original and only Wallace Sinclair, otherwise Marlowe, the adopted son of the late Commodore Marlowe, and this fellow is Walter Glowers, son of Herme Glowers, father unknown."

"Very well. The old gent disinherited me, as you have heard, and under the provisions of the will left by him, I could not get a cent in my own name, and the property would all revert to the old lady, or her niece, Ida."

"But I happen to know a point that they never dreamed of. The old gentleman, in one of his moments of anger, let out a little secret, which was to the effect that this same Walter Glowers was his (the old gent's) natural son. He always hated the boy, and the way in which he came to reveal the secret was the fact that he had got his back up at me because I would not consent to take his name after discovering that I was not his son, and to spite me he threatened to will all his property to this fellow, who, he said, ardently as he hated him, had a better right to it anyway. I denied that he had a better right, or any at all, for that matter, and the discussion waxed hot. Finally he came out with this statement: 'You contemptible ingrate, you force me to reveal a secret that I hoped to keep within my own breast—that Walter Glowers is my own son!'"

"After I left, I wrote the old gentleman a letter in which I referred to the matter. In answer he also referred to it, and begged me not to mention it to anybody, and he would bequeath me all his property whether I took his name or not."

"I never answered the letter, but there is enough in the old gentleman's letter to prove that this fellow is his son."

"Nobody is in possession of these facts except myself. Well, when I first came back these lawyers were after me with a proposition to take my case for what there was in it; but knowing that I had no chance in an honorable way, I refused to put in a claim."

"Finally they ran across this fellow somewhere in the West, and brought him on. The first I knew of him was one day when he came to see me to urge me to put in a claim. I still refused, and he made the careless remark that he wished he had as good a chance at the property as I had; and I, in a joking spirit, offered to exchange places with him. He jumped at the proposition, and we have masqueraded under each other's personalities ever since."

"Do you intend to avail yourself of the

opportunity thus afforded you to take possession of the property?" asked the detective.

"Certainly not. I am no thief, I hope. But I will let these rascals go on till they get to the end of their tether, which will not take long, and will probably result in the destruction of the papers which disinherit me, and then I will expose the whole affair."

"And he will get the property, of course?"

"I am not so sure about that. However, I do not care which way it goes. But my opinion is that we will both stand an equal chance of success."

"Do you fear nothing from these fellows?"

"Certainly not. Why should I?"

"I'll tell you why. They design to put you out of the way."

"Impossible!"

"I tell you that it is true. Do you know this Humphrey on whom you are requested to call?"

"No."

"He is a professional assassin."

CHAPTER XVI.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

THAD's statement had strange effect upon the young man.

For a long time he stared at the detective with a helpless, bewildered expression.

Finally he said in a hoarse whisper:

"How do you know this?"

"I know him well for one thing," rejoined the detective; "and besides I know they design to murder you. They have already made one attempt, and only for two fortunate circumstances, they would doubtless have succeeded. One was that you were not here, and the other fellow was mistaken for you; and the other was that I had the pleasure of misleading the assassin."

"Otherwise Glowers would have been killed in my place, eh?" interrupted Sinclair.

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, tell me, how came you to take such an interest in the matter? It can't be that you are one of these detectives, can it?"

Thad was in a quandary whether to tell the young man who he was or not; but after reflecting upon the subject for a moment he concluded that he could trust him.

"Yes," he replied at length. "You have guessed correctly. I am a detective, and this Walter Glowers knows me in my true personality and by my right name. So I beg that you will refrain from speaking of me as anything but Sharpe."

"I guess there is no danger of my speaking of you as anything else, unless you tell me some other name," laughed the young man.

Thad thought a moment.

"If you have no objection, we will suppose for the present that that is my name. A detective cannot be too careful. When we are better acquainted, as I trust we shall be, you shall know me in my true character, if you wish."

"I shall be glad to. But in the mean time, I shall be content to know you simply as Mr. Sharpe. Now, Mr. Sharpe, you would advise me not to call upon the party in Catherine street, would you?"

"No, you might call upon him, if you like, and I will go with you."

"Thank you. That will be a good arrangement. But tell me now, if it is a fair question, what are you working upon this case for? What are you endeavoring to discover?"

"I believe I can trust you, and as you have been frank with me, I shall tell you. But first let me ask you whether you have ever heard it hinted, or whether it ever occurred to you that the old gentleman's death was rather mysterious?"

"I have heard it from no one else, but it has struck me that such is the case."

"Of course you know nothing about it?"

"No, I have held myself so completely aloof from everybody connected with the family that I am in entire ignorance of what has been going on there since my departure a year ago."

"Did it ever occur to you that in case of this attempt of yours to obtain possession of the property and at the same time it should be discovered that the old gentleman was murdered, it would look ugly for you?"

"Indeed I have, and that is one reason for my not wanting to put in a claim, and present reason for masquerading under a false character. Still, I think I could put my finger on the guilty party without much trouble."

"Whom do you imagine it is?"

"Hermie Glowers."

"Why do you fix it upon her?"

"Because she is the only one who I can imagine has a motive."

"What is her motive?"

"She has, or thinks she has, several. In the first place, she feels that the old gentleman wronged her, and then she was galled that he should have adopted me instead of her son."

"Is it not strange that she did not divulge the secret of the old commodore being the father of her son?"

"It does seem strange; but she is a strange woman for one thing, and then she may have had good reasons for keeping the secret to herself. There must have been something of this kind, for I remember of hearing her say once a short time before I went away, when she was having some words with him, that if she only dared to expose him, she would not submit to what she was now compelled to."

"Do you think that this Walter Glowers has had anything to do with it?"

"No, sir, I do not. In fact, I may say that I know he has not. He was not in the country at the time, nor for nearly a month after the murder occurred."

"And you were here?"

"Yes, I was here at this very house, and of the two of us, there is more likelihood of my being guilty of it than he."

"I see. Now, Mr. Sinclair, there is another question I desire to ask you. Do you know anything about this so-called ghost that has caused so much excitement?"

"Nothing except what Walter has told me."

"There was nothing of it before you went away?"

"No. The girl who is said to appear was then in the flesh."

"Excuse me, but I believe she was your betrothed, was she not?"

"Yes."

"Were you very fond of each other?"

"She thought a great deal of me, I believe, but I must confess that I did not care much for her."

"Your foster-father's declaration that you should never marry her did not seriously affect you, then?"

"Not in the least."

"Were you aware that she followed you away, or tried to follow you?"

"Yes, I heard that such was the case."

"And you cared not enough for her to allow her to discover your whereabouts?"

"No."

"What do you think about the story of her being dead?"

"I have no reason to doubt that it is true."

"Did not Walter Glowers tell you that she was still living?"

"No."

"He did me."

"He did?"

"Yes. He told me that he had seen her within a short time, and that if she was dead she must have died within a few days."

"One of his bluffs, most likely. However, she may be alive, for aught I know to the contrary."

"Pardon my apparent inquisitiveness, but who is this Ida of whom I heard you speak when Glowers was here?"

"She is the niece of the old gentleman."

"And you are betrothed to her at present, are you not?"

"Not exactly; but if everything goes right, we may be."

"Which party is holding back, the young lady, to see whether you get the fortune or not?"

"No, it is myself who am holding back. She would marry me to-morrow if I said the word."

"Did you know her before you went away?"

"Oh, yes, ever since we were children."

"And you have always thought a great deal of each other, have you not?"

"Yes, we have been lovers ever since either of us can remember."

"Still, if you had not had the falling out with your foster-father you would have married Phoebe?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Was Ida aware of this fact?"

"Yes."

"And what did she say about it?"

"Oh, she was terribly despondent over the prospects, of course, and we have had many a childish cry together."

"Has Ida ever shown any revengeful spirit when the subject was broached?"

Sinclair sprang out of his chair as though an asp had stung him.

He stood staring at the detective for some seconds, and seemed undecided whether to strike him or not.

At length he said in a voice tremulous with emotion:

"What do you mean by that question?"

Thad saw that he had made a mistake.

He had unconsciously approached the critical point to which he was aiming too abruptly, and it had shocked the young man.

Thad saw that he was in for it, however, and determined to make the most of it.

"I beg your pardon," he said, coolly.

"The exigencies of the case compel me to questions that I would a thousand times rather leave unasked."

"Possibly," retorted the young man, still trembling with pent-up passion. "But I will allow no insinuation or implications cast upon that woman!"

"I hope you do not think that I would be guilty of such a thing sir," ejaculated the detective sharply. "But my duty compels me to probe even in the most sensitive spots. However, I shall spare you the mortification of answering any questions in the premises. I should like to ask you, however, what you meant by asking Glowers if she was playing her part."

"That had no reference to her, and besides, it was a private matter between ourselves, which I am not at liberty to divulge at present. It could in no way interest you, anyway."

"Very well. I will leave you now. When will you call upon the party in Catherine street?"

"About ten this evening, I believe is the time. Do you think it will be safe for me to go?"

"Yes, if I am with you. I must go home first, though, and change my appearance. I will meet you at the New York end of the bridge at half-past nine. You will not know me by sight, but I will utter the word Tiger as I approach."

"All right, I will be there."

It was after six o'clock when the detective left the St. George Hotel, and he lost no time in getting across to his studio.

But before making himself up as a ruffian again, it occurred to him that he had better go home and see how matters stood there, inasmuch as he had left the nurse there the day before.

Walking down to Eighth avenue and taking a horse-car there, he was soon at Thirty-fourth street, where he jumped off the car and started to walk leisurely to his house.

As he approached the house he was surprised to see a carriage standing in front, and before he could come up to it the vehicle drove rapidly away.

The incident, for some reason, caused him some uneasiness, and he hastened into the house.

There everything appeared as usual.

His wife met him as she always did, and he found the children at their studies.

So that for a moment he thought his apprehensions had been groundless.

Still, he could not bring himself to feel quite satisfied.

"What was that carriage doing in front, my dear?" he asked of his wife.

"Carriage?" she ejaculated in surprise.

"I saw no carriage."

"You did not?" he exclaimed with increasing alarm.

"Certainly not."

"Well, one drove away just this minute, nevertheless. Where is the woman whom I brought here yesterday?"

"Upstairs in the room I assigned to her."

"Are you sure?"

"All I can say about it is that she left me

not more than ten minutes ago, saying that she was going to her room to change her clothing for dinner."

"Well, suppose you have some one go up and see whether she is still there, my dear."

Mrs. Burr was also alarmed by this time, and instead of ordering any one else to go up, went herself, and at a pretty lively gait.

Thad waited for her return with breathless anxiety, and he had not long to wait.

In less than a minute after her departure she came flying down-stairs as white as a ghost, and gave the alarm that the woman was gone!

"This is strange," mused the detective. "I wonder if it can be possible that that woman has gone of her own free will this time."

And then, without waiting for an answer to his question, Thad dashed out of the house and off in the direction he had seen the hack go.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LIVELY CHASE.

As soon as the detective reached the corner, he looked about for a conveyance, and as there happened to be a cab standing near at hand, he sprang in and gave the order to the driver.

Instinctively he had himself driven toward Broadway, and as his vehicle was going as rapidly as the horse could propel it, he was not long in reaching that thoroughfare.

He then glanced about to see if he could sight the fugitive carriage.

But he could see nothing of it.

He was almost in despair, when he decided to have himself driven to Catherine street on a venture.

He gave his order, and the cab turned down the street.

For three or four blocks it bowled along at a good rate of speed, and the detective kept a sharp lookout for the carriage.

At length they came to a place where there was such a jam of vehicles that the detective's cab was compelled to stop for a moment or two.

Thad was chagrined at the enforced delay, and still kept watching for the carriage.

As one vehicle after another toiled by, the detective took note of it and its occupants as far as possible.

Finally one carriage rolled up alongside of the cab, and for one brief moment only paused.

But in that moment the occupant, evidently anxious to get on, put her head out of the window.

As she did so, Thad caught an excellent view of her face.

He was astonished.

He was more than astonished, he was almost stricken dumb.

And no wonder.

It was the head of Hermie Glowers.

What could it mean?

What had been the old lady's motive in telling him that this woman had sailed for Europe the day before he called upon her?

Could it be that she, too, was in the plot?

All this flashed through his mind in an instant, and he was on the point of springing from the cab and approaching the woman's carriage with a view of arresting her without more ado, when she, apparently having guessed from the way he had looked at her that he wanted her, suddenly withdrew her head and gave some kind of a secret signal to the driver, and he, seeing his opportunity for escape from the jam, whipped up, and, before the detective realized what he was about, had dashed out of sight.

All Thad could do now was to tell his driver to whip up with a view to overtaking the retreating carriage.

Fortunately they had fairly clear driving for the next few minutes, and before very long the detective had sighted the fugitive once more.

Calling the driver's attention to it, he ordered him to keep it in sight, as Thad had now concluded to merely follow the other vehicle and discover where it went, and then turn his attention to the finding of the abducted nurse.

Before he had followed the Glowers woman's carriage very far it turned out of Broadway and drove toward Sixth avenue.

Thad's cab followed.

The other did not appear to be in so much of a hurry now, for they had slackened their speed.

But when they turned into Sixth avenue they turned up-town again, and started off at a break-neck pace.

It was evident to the detective now that the woman had guessed his purpose, and was trying to give him the slip.

The cabby was up to snuff, however, and put off after her like the wind.

One scowling glance backward on the part of the carriage-driver now told the whole story.

It was just as the detective had surmised.

There was a lively race now.

Up Sixth avenue dashed the carriage, and the cab was only a few feet behind, and kept in that position with the greatest ease.

Seeing that he could not escape them by driving straight on, the hackman soon wheeled off the avenue, and was soon going up Seventh avenue at the same rapid rate of speed.

It was easy to be seen that the hackman was rapidly losing his temper, and he had not proceeded up Seventh avenue very far when he was seen to put his head down to the hole communicating with the inside of the carriage.

And the next instant Herme Glower put her head out of the window and glared back.

She then said something to her driver, and he immediately slackened his speed to a walk.

That made no difference to the detective.

His vehicle also slackened pace.

This appeared to enrage the hackman, for he almost instantly laid on the lash and his vehicle now dashed off at a higher rate of speed than before.

How long this race would have been kept up is hard to imagine, had it not been for an accident.

The carriage was dashing along like the wind, when suddenly it came to a place where several vehicles were passing at the same time, and just at that moment a carriage driven by an intoxicated driver came whirling along from the opposite direction.

The hackman tried to avoid the on-coming vehicle, but he was so hampered by other carriages on the other side of him, that he could not get out of the way quickly enough, and the other carriage struck his hind wheel, knocking it into splinters and throwing the Glowers woman's carriage upon its side.

The frightened occupants sprung out as soon as they could regain their feet after the carriage capsized.

The detective was upon them as they crawled out of their perilous position.

The cab stopped as soon as it arrived at the spot where the accident occurred, and Thad had a chance to survey the wreck and the late occupants as they made their escape.

The first one that came forth did not surprise him.

He expected to see her come out.

It was Herme Glowers.

But the next two caused him a good deal of surprise as well as pleasure, especially in the case of one of them.

One of them was Mrs. Beech and the other was Ida Marlowe, the niece of the old lady.

Now he was sure that the old lady was concerned in the plot, whatever it comprised.

Otherwise she would not, in the first place, have told him the untruth about Herme Glowers going to Europe, and in the second place, she would not have allowed her niece to be out on this kind of an expedition with this woman.

But what puzzled him most was what Mrs. Beech was doing with them.

Was it possible that she was a willing party to this affair?

While these thoughts were flitting through his mind, the detective dismounted, and was about to offer his services to the distressed ladies when the Glowers woman happened to look up and see him.

In the whole course of his career as a detective Thad had never encountered such a black and malignant scowl as she gave him.

If he had been in the least timid it would have deterred him from proffering his assistance.

But he was not so easily abashed, and said:

"Ladies, can I be of any assistance to you?"

"Yes," retorted Herme, in a masculine voice. "You can be of infinite service—by going about your business. It is a pretty question to ask, at all events, after being the cause of our trouble."

"I am very sorry to have been the innocent cause of your trouble, and still sorrier that I cannot be of any assistance to you. And therefore I will leave you."

As he said the latter the detective strode toward the sidewalk, where the Beech woman had gone.

Thad pretended to pass her carelessly, but as he did so, he whispered:

"Mrs. Beech, you are in this woman's power?"

The woman looked up at him in surprise.

"Who are you?" she asked in alarm.

"The friend who took you to his house on Thirty-fourth street, after rescuing you from a horrible death."

The woman glanced apprehensively toward Herme, who was now busily engaged in giving orders about the righting of her carriage, and then whispered:

"Are you the detective?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I am in her power."

"How came you to leave the house?"

"I did not intend to leave, sir," she protested earnestly. "Indeed I did not."

"I cannot understand how you could have left then. These women did not carry you away, I am sure."

"Some other time I will tell you how it was. I cannot now. She is watching me."

"Tell me the truth, Mrs. Beech, do you want me to take you back, or would you rather remain with this woman?"

"I would prefer to go with you," stammered the woman in a manner that showed conclusively that she was telling an untruth; "but I am too much afraid of her."

"You know that you have nothing to fear from her as long as you are under my care, Mrs. Beech. But I guess the truth is, you would prefer to remain with her."

So saying, he strode away and left her, and pretended to walk on, but he gave a signal to his cabman to meet him round the corner.

It was growing quite dark by this time, and Thad knew that he would have a better chance of following the carriage than he had before, and so he watched around the corner until the carriage drove on, and then started in pursuit again.

They evidently did not notice that the detective was following them this time, for they drove along at a leisurely gait and paid no attention to him, although he was dogging their steps as before.

They drove to Sixty-third street, and down that street to the residence of Mrs. Marlowe, and there stopped.

To the detective's surprise, however, only the niece alighted there, and the carriage rolled on.

Thad followed, and to his further surprise and consternation, they turned down-town again.

He could not understand this, but he determined to see it out if it took all night.

But when he had followed the carriage, which drove very slowly, clear down to the City Hall, only to see it turn and start up-town again, he began to get out of patience.

More than this, he began to strongly suspect that this woman had some motive in view.

But what could it be?

Evidently to keep him engaged while something was being transacted in his absence.

But why should he think this?

There was no reason to suppose that she knew him.

And if she did, what was there to be done in his absence, or that could not be done as well if he were not thus engaged?

But when he got up as high as Thirteenth street again, and he saw that it was after nine o'clock, it all came to him.

He was to be at the bridge at half-past nine, and he had to go to his apartments and make up before going.

Was it possible that this woman had recognized him, and had been using this method to keep him away from his engagement, so that young Sinclair would be murdered?

Whatever had been at the bottom of it, Thad was determined to follow the woman

no longer, and instructed his driver to turn West on Thirteenth street.

If he had any doubt about this having been a deliberate scheme on Herme's part to lure him away from his duties, all doubt vanished when, on turning to go, he was greeted by a loud and boisterous peal of derisive laughter, and looking back, saw the woman's dark, repulsive face at the carriage window staring at him and grinning derisively.

Thad paid no attention to her, but hurried on to his studio, where he soon made himself up as a ruffian, and then returned to the cab, and had himself driven toward the bridge.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

IN spite of the detective's best efforts, it was ten o'clock when he reached the approach to the bridge, and to his great disappointment, Sinclair was nowhere to be seen.

For a moment his heart almost stood still.

Was it possible that, as he had not arrived at the Tiger's place as soon as he thought he ought to, the ruffian had come out and found the young man?

Or perhaps he had encountered Walter Glowers, and he had led him away to some place.

But without pausing to consider the subject very long, the detective hastened away toward Catherine street.

Arriving at the number at which Tiger lived, he sprung out of the cab and bounded up-stairs several steps at a time.

A vigorous knock at the door brought the Spider, who merely put her nose out the door and demanded what was wanted.

"I want to see Tiger," replied Thad, not taking time to assume the dialect appropriate to his make-up.

"Wal, he's not here," growled the old woman.

"Don't lie to me!" roared the detective, who believed that she was resorting to this stratagem to keep him out until her hopeful son could complete his horrible work.

"I hope I may die if I ain't tellin' ye the plain truth," whined the hag in a subdued and frightened tone.

"Stand aside and I'll see for myself!" exclaimed the detective, pushing the old woman out of his way.

Thad strode hurriedly into the room, and glanced about him.

There was nobody in sight, and the old woman, noticing his disappointment, indulged in a soft chuckle.

"I told ye he wasn't here," she mumbled.

Without paying any heed to her, the detective pushed on into the second room, and from that into the kitchen, and was forced to admit the truthfulness of the old woman's statement.

She indulged in another triumphant chuckle when he returned to the front room.

"I told ye my Pauley wasn't here," she repeated.

"I see he isn't," rejoined the detective, angrily. "Where is he?"

"I don't know."

Here she went off in a maudlin kind of a laugh, which ended in a fit of coughing.

"You are lying to me, woman."

"Deed, I don't know, sir."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Only a few minits."

"Was anybody with him?"

"Yes, a young dude."

"What was he like?"

"He was light, had blue eyes and mustache."

"Did you hear his name?"

"Lemme see. Yep, Pauley called him Mr. Sinclair, I think."

"Great Heaven!"

Thad could not repress the exclamation.

His worst fears then were realized.

Could it be possible that the young man had come to this place alone after what he had told him?

"Did the young man come here alone?" he demanded, turning upon the old woman again.

"Yep, I b'lieve he did," was her reply.

The young idiot! thought the detective.

"Did they not say anything about which way they were going?" he demanded of the Spider.

"Nope."

"Look here, old woman," cried the detective, clutching her roughly by the shoulder, "if I find that you are lying to me, your old hide won't hold shucks when I get back."

"My Pauley'll be here then," she remarked.

"That will do you no good, for I will first make shoe-strings of you, and then take him to jail. So you had better tell me where he has gone."

The old woman was thoroughly frightened by this time, and her teeth began to chatter.

For, as a matter of fact, Thad was a villainous-looking individual in this make-up.

Seeing that he had her frightened, he decided to carry the matter a little further and compel her, if possible, to divulge the whereabouts of her cut-throat son.

Giving her another vigorous shake, he said, in a low, terrible voice, that was calculated to strike terror into any one's heart:

"Spider, I've changed my mind, and on second thought, I think I'll slit your wizen now, unless you give it away where the Tiger has gone to-night."

"What do you want of him?" she asked, in a trembling voice.

"I want nothing of him. I only want to rescue the young man he is with, and whom it is your son's intention to murder."

"A ray of hope lighted the old woman's dark brow.

"Air ye sure ye don't want ter hurt my boy?" she asked.

"Yes, I am sure, provided you tell me where he is in a very short time. But if I have to hunt very much for him, or you keep me waiting much longer, it will go as hard with him as it will with yourself."

"Why, then I'll tell you. Him and the young man went to Brooklyn, where they are to meet another young man, and they are to do up the other young man that they are goin' to see."

"Is this true?"

"I hope I may die if it ain't."

Thad waited to hear no more, but darted out of the door, and was soon on his way across the big bridge.

Thad was not long in reaching the St. George Hotel, and jumping from the cab, rushed into the office and inquired for Sinclair.

He had gone out.

The detective was at his wits' end which way to turn next.

It was impossible to tell which way the young man had gone.

A second inquiry brought out the information that Sinclair had left the house alone, so that if he was in the company of Glowers and the Tiger, he must have met them at the bridge.

When the detective left the hotel he dismissed the cab and started off on foot.

An idea occurred to him that possibly the Tiger would lead his victim to the lonely spot beneath the bridge pier on the Brooklyn side, as being the most available place for carrying out his infamous design of any place in the two cities, and thence Thad made his way.

The night was eminently suited to the committal of such a deed, being dark and murky, and a fine mist, half rain, half fog, filling the air.

A few minutes' walk brought the detective to the former rendezvous beneath the pier.

But this time it was so dark that it was impossible to see even the outline of an object three feet away.

After leaving the street and turning toward the pier, Thad stole along cautiously and noiselessly until he was within a yard of the great mass of stone forming the pier.

He was on the street side of the pier, and the Tiger, if he was there at all, would be under the bridge, and consequently around the corner of the tower from where the detective had approached.

Here Thad paused and listened.

Scarcely had he done so, when he, was startled at hearing a strange gurgling sound, somewhere in the darkness, as of some one being strangled.

The detective recognized the horrid sound too well.

It was some seconds before the detective could locate the sound, and when he did, he found it to be in a direction that he least expected.

On the upper side of the pier it was inclosed by the extension of the wall of a warehouse that occupied the space under the bridge the rest of the way up to the next street.

From the side on which Thad had approached it did not appear possible for any one to get into this inclosure, so whoever the parties were must have entered from the opposite side.

The situation flashed upon him in an instant, and he was not long in creeping around to the opposite side of the pier.

Here he found by feeling along the wall, which was composed of rough boards, that a single board had been removed, making a space just large enough for a human being to creep in.

Again, he paused and listened.

This time he heard talking in a low tone of voice, and drew nearer to catch, if possible, what was being said.

He soon ascertained that there were three men, although two of them appeared to be doing all the talking, the third one merely grunting an occasional affirmative or negative to the others' remarks.

"Well, what more do you want of me?" was the first intelligible sentence he caught.

"I want a release, in writing, of all the claim you pretend to hold in the estate."

"I told you that you were welcome to that."

"But that is not all."

"What more then?"

"I want you to give me a written agreement that you will never go near or make any overtures of affection to Ida Marlowe."

This name caused the detective to start.

Up to that moment he could only conjecture who the parties were, but now there could be no doubt about it.

It was Wallace Sinclair and Walter Glowers.

"This is too much!" cried Wallace, passionately.

"Then take the consequences," growled Walter in a low, threatening guttural.

"Coward!" uttered Wallace. "You would not have the courage to demand such a thing if we were on equal footing. But now that you have dragged me into this dark hole from which no human voice can penetrate to the outside world, you dare to ask me to relinquish all that I hold dear and sacred in this world. Can you not be satisfied with the old gentleman's millions?"

"No, the old man's millions would be worse than dross to me without her. Besides I have another object in not wanting her to marry you."

"What is that?"

"I have a good deal of respect for the girl, and I do not want to see her wedded to a pauper that could not supply her with the necessities of life."

This remark was followed by a low, mocking chuckle.

"Fiend that you are!" hissed Wallace. "Rob me of my just inheritance, make a beggar of me, and then taunt me for my poverty! This is the work of a fiend, not of a man!"

"Take care!" growled Walter. "Remember you are in my power, and it is entirely with me whether you ever see the light of the sun again, so you had better be a little sparing of your hard words."

"Scoundrel and coward! do you imagine that I fear you because you have your hired assassin at hand ready to cut my throat? No, if you had the power to kill me a thousand times, I would neither grant what you ask nor cease calling you a villain and an arrant coward with my last breath!"

"Then you refuse to grant my request?"

"Yes. A thousand times, yes!"

"As you like," returned Walter coolly.

"I have given you a chance, and if you do not choose to accept it, it is no concern of mine. Tiger do your work."

"Dat's w'at I likes to hear," growled the ruffian. "Talk's all we'll enough in its place; but business is business. What?" he exclaimed suddenly. "You fights back does yer? Wal, I'll soon fix yer."

With that the detective heard a severe struggle, accompanied by a groan, and he waited no longer.

Springing through the opening, he flashed his lantern about the interior of the inclosure.

The ruffian already had the young man upon his back and was choking him with one hand and feeling in his belt for a knife with the other.

As short as the time was between the detective's entrance and the flashing of his light, the Tiger had already drawn his knife, raised it above his head, and a moment more would have buried it in the young man's heart.

But the knife never descended, for the next instant Thad had planted a blow upon the assassin's head that curled him up insensible upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

A VALUABLE DISCOVERY.

THE detective's lantern had fallen to the ground in his excitement, and as soon as he had laid the ruffian out, he picked it up and flashed it about once more.

To his chagrin Walter Glowers had already made his escape.

Knowing that it was no use to attempt to follow him in the darkness, Thad turned his attention to the other young man.

He had been rendered unconscious by the choking he had received from the Tiger, and was now just recovering.

He raised his eyes when the detective held the lantern down over his face, and not recognizing him, assumed a frightened expression.

For an instant the detective could not understand this, and then it occurred to him that he was made up as about as villainous a looking character as the Tiger himself.

He smiled at the young man's fear, and uttered some words of reassurance, and then turned to the ruffian.

The Tiger was just beginning to recover consciousness, and was writhing and groaning in his agony.

To avoid further trouble from him, Thad snapped a pair of bracelets upon his wrists, and a pair of shackles upon his legs.

That brought the villain to his senses, and he looked up in astonishment at the detective.

"W'y, bu'st me, if it ain't de Panther," he growled. "W'at d'yer mean by puttin' dese ornaments on me, Panther?"

"You'll know soon enough," replied Thad.

The Tiger saw then that he was sold.

"I see," he murmured. "You've bin a-playin' it onter me all dis time. Ye'r' a blamed detective. I might know'd it if I'd 'a' been haf as sharp as I t'ought I was."

"Lie still, Tiger," commanded the detective, "and I'll give you a buggy-ride pretty soon."

The ruffian turned over on his side, groaned, and then relapsed into silence.

Thad again turned to the young man, who had by this time recovered sufficiently to sit up.

He again stared suspiciously at the detective.

"I am not surprised that you do not know me," remarked Thad, laughing. "But when I tell you that I am the detective whom you were to meet at the bridge you will remember me. Come, get up. You must return to the hotel. You are getting wet here."

The rain was coming down in steady torrents.

The young man made no reply, but staggered to his feet, and prepared to accompany the detective.

Thad got the Tiger upon his feet and led him to the street.

They had not gone far before they met a policeman, when Thad made himself known to him, related the circumstances of the attempted assassination, and turned the ruffian over to him.

The detective and his companion then started for the hotel.

Very few words were exchanged until they got into Sinclair's room, and then Thad began:

"How did it happen, old fellow?"

"I can hardly tell you," replied the young man. "I went to the New York entrance to the bridge and waited for you until nearly ten o'clock, and as you did not come, I did not know but you had made a mistake, and thought you had told me to meet you in front of the fellow's house, so I went there."

I had not waited there long before Walter came along and asked me what I was waiting there for. I told him that I was waiting for a friend. At which he laughed, and said he knew who the friend was, that it was a detective, and that he had already gone up-stairs, meaning into the Tiger's place, and told me to come up with him. I suspected that all was not right, and refused. I then started for home, not thinking for a moment that they would follow me. I went on leisurely and when I turned out of Fulton street, Brooklyn, into one of the dark intersecting streets I had only proceeded about a block when these fellows sprung out of an alley, and before I knew what I was about, had me bound and gagged.

"They then led me to the place where you found me, and you know the rest."

"Yes, and a narrow escape it was for you, old man."

"Indeed, it was, and I can never repay you the debt of gratitude I owe you."

"Don't mention it, my boy. I was only performing my duty, and a very pleasant duty it is when I can save a human life."

The two men were silent and thoughtful for some time.

Sinclair was the first to break the silence.

"Well," he began, "I never could have believed that Walter Glowens was as bad as that. I knew he was a wild, reckless fellow, but I never believed there was anything very bad about him."

"But you are convinced of it now?"

"Yes, I am sorry to say that I am. I would have cared less for losing the property, or even the girl, whom I prize much more highly, than to have been forced to confess that the friend of my childhood was a heartless villain."

"Do you not think now that he is probably at the bottom of all the villainy?"

"The murder?"

"Yes."

"No, bad as I have found him to be, I cannot yet bring myself to believe that. In my opinion, too, his mother is responsible for this night's work."

This remark brought to the detective's mind the incidents preceding his trip to Brooklyn that evening, and it struck him now that the young man's words were well-founded.

"Do you imagine that he will come here again?" asked the detective after a moment's pause.

"Hardly," returned Sinclair, looking up in surprise at the question. "But if he should have the assurance to come, I shall be ready for him."

"What would you do?"

"Shoot him on sight!"

"No, don't do that. You merely get yourself into trouble for nothing. If he comes, he will most likely try to resume friendship with you, and if he does, pretend to make it up, and arrange for a future meeting, and inform me of the time and place. For he is in a tight place now, and will doubtless keep shady for the present, so that it will only be through some scheme of this kind that I will have a chance to get at him. In the mean time I will get a warrant out for his arrest when I meet him."

"Pardon me, Mr. Sharpe," said Sinclair, "but please do not ask me to enter into anything of this character. It is repugnant to my very soul. No matter how deeply he has wronged me or how many wrongs he may heap upon me in the future, I cannot betray him under a guise of friendship. If he comes here and attempts to renew our severed friendship, I will tell him frankly that it can never be, and moreover, I will curse him as long as I have breath to utter. No, Mr. Sharpe, I cannot be a Judas, even when justice demands extreme measures."

"I appreciate your heroism, my boy, and will not ask you to betray one who was once your friend. You were much attached to him at one time were you not?"

"I could not have loved him any better if he had been my own brother, and he appeared to have the same feeling toward me. But that is all at an end now. I shall not even reveal the secret of his birth so that he may obtain his inheritance."

"He has the advantage of you there, old fellow, in not requiring any. The State will look out for him."

The young man shuddered.

"My God! That is true. I had not thought of that. His career is at an end, and he is so young, and talented. Suppose I do not appear against him?"

"Do you have any such idea?"

"Most decidedly, if thereby he can be saved from a life sentence. What do you think?"

"In the first place, that you are an idiot. And in the second, that even if you did not appear against this cold-blooded villain, who, but for me, would have murdered you, I shall, and more than that, I will do all in my power not to send him to the Penitentiary for life, but to hang him."

The young man's frame underwent a strange series of contortions, and it was evident that he was suffering the most intense mental agony.

Finally he raised his eyes to the detective's face, and seemed to be searching for a little pity, like a culprit who is himself about to undergo punishment.

But Thad saw what was passing in his mind, and steeled his heart intentionally against all appeals on behalf of the culprit.

The young man saw this, and giving vent to a deep sigh, appeared to become resigned.

"So be it," he sighed, and buried his face in his hands.

The detective did not disturb his reverie, but quietly took his leave.

Early the next forenoon the detective repaired to the so-called haunted house again.

As had been his wont lately, he entered the house by way of the secret passage.

The house was all quiet, and as he passed through the bedroom into which the passage opened, and which had formerly been the dead Phoebe's room, he noticed that the bed had not been disturbed since his last visit.

He knew this, because when he was there the last time he had arranged the covering in such a way that he would know it if they were afterward disturbed.

Dust had collected everywhere, showing how completely the place had been abandoned.

The detective passed through into the front room, and there found everything as it had been on his last visit.

Dust and cobwebs seemed to have taken possession of the once fashionable old house.

He walked to the front of the room where the cabinet stood, and as it was very dark in the room, pushed open one of the shutters to admit the light.

Then, as he turned toward the cabinet, his eyes fell upon a sight that caused him a thrill.

The top of the cabinet was coated thickly with dust, and in one place the impression of a small hand was plainly visible.

The hand was evidently that of a lady, and on the forefinger was a ring, evidently an engagement ring.

The detective tried to remember whether Ida Marlowe wore a ring on her right forefinger, and as well as he could recall she did not, and then he thought of what Sinclair had told him about not being betrothed to Ida, and he felt pretty well satisfied that it was not her hand.

This exploded a half-formed theory of his that it was Ida who was playing the ghost, especially after hearing Sinclair ask Glowens if the girl was playing her part.

After having devoted a little thought to this subject, Thad turned his attention to the cabinet.

He had never been quite satisfied that there was not some document which would throw some light upon the relations of Walter Glowens to the old gentleman, and he determined to give it another search.

Unlocking the top drawer with his skeleton key, he proceeded to examine one by one, every paper in each drawer in turn, until he reached the bottom.

Thus he put in two weary hours at this work, and was compelled to confess to utter failure in the end.

Nothing that touched upon the case in any way whatever was to be found.

He was about to abandon the task, when it occurred to him that in pushing in the last drawer he heard something rattle at the rear of the drawer.

Quickly pulling it out again and removing it altogether, he was gratified to see that there was a paper crumpled up behind the drawer

By removing another drawer, he was able to reach his arm in and draw it forth.

As soon as his eyes fell upon the document, his heart gave a wild bound.

And no wonder.

It was a will, signed by Commodore Marlowe, and bequeathing all his property to his two natural sons, known to the world as Wallace Sinclair and Walter Glowens!

CHAPTER XX.

A USELESS SEARCH.

So elated was the detective over his discovery, that he did not notice the entrance at the front door of the house of three other persons until he heard footsteps on the stairs.

He was compelled to beat a hasty retreat to avoid being seen, which he did and concealed himself behind the *portieres* at the opposite end of the apartment.

He had barely got into his place of concealment when the door opened and the two lawyers, McCoy and Bagley, accompanied by Herme Glowens, entered the room.

The tall man was as usual in the lead, and he walked straight to the cabinet, followed by the others.

As soon as he had arrived in front of the cabinet, McCoy turned to Herme Glowens and said:

"Now, madam, you will see that it is just as we have told you over and over again, there is no document such as you describe in here. We have gone through this cabinet so often that we know almost every paper by heart."

"You may be right," replied the woman, in her masculine voice, "but I am positive that there is a document somewhere which will prove, if found, that my son is the son of Commodore Marlowe, and until that is obtained I shall hope for nothing from the estate for my son, and consequently I will advance no more money."

"But, my dear lady," protested little Bagley, "whether the document is found or not the estate must go to some one, and nobody stands as good a chance as your son."

"Nonsense! How about Wallace Sinclair?"

"He has not a ghost of a chance, my dear madam. In fact, he has despaired and gone West."

"Are you sure of this?" inquired the woman, with a sudden kindling of hope in her dark, melancholy face.

"So sure of it that we are willing to back our professional reputation on the assertion that the young man will never be seen here again. Now?"

The woman stared at him in bewilderment.

"What do you mean?" she finally asked.

"Just what we say," replied McCoy.

"Do you mean to say that you have had him put out of the way?"

"Induced to leave the country for good, that is all."

"I want no equivocation, sir. If there has been any foul play in this affair, I want to know it."

"Madam," ejaculated little Bagley, turning upon her with a great show of dignity, "when you employ attorneys to manage a case for you, you expect to have them succeed, do you not?"

"Yes, but—"

"Very well. The attorneys go in for the same thing, and if they cannot succeed in one way, they try another, and the client has no business to inquire into their methods."

"That depends upon the client. In my case I wish particularly to know the methods, and I shall allow you to proceed no further with my case until I know what has been the fate of that young man."

"Well, then, if you must know, he is no more with the living," explained the tall man.

"You have murdered him?"

"Sh-s-s-sh!" cried McCoy. "Somebody might hear you. Besides, we don't call it that in polite society."

"This is horrible!" exclaimed the woman. "I want no more to do with this business. I know that my boy has had nothing to do with this dreadful affair."

"That is just where you are mistaken, madam. Your son has had everything to do

with it. It was he that first planned the taking off of old—"

"Stop!" she cried frantically, "I will near no more. And what is more, I wash my hands of the whole affair."

This appeared to be too much for the little red-headed lawyer to endure.

Squaring himself in front of the woman, he began, in his peculiar nasal voice:

"Do you mean to say, madam, that you propose to leave us with the bag to hold after having gone this far with us?"

The woman had folded her arms, and stood coolly surveying the little lawyer.

When he propounded the above question she merely nodded an affirmative.

This served to excite the little lawyer still more.

"Do you imagine we are going to allow such a thing, madam?" he almost yelled.

Another nod.

"Well, we won't, madam! We know what we are about, and do not propose to be imposed upon. Do you know what we can do with this son of yours, and what we will do, in case you go back on us now?"

She shook her head, and emphasized it with a faint ironical smile.

"Well, I'll tell you. We can hang him, and we will!"

Again she smiled faintly, but followed it by asking:

"What for?"

"Murder, madam. Murder. He, and he alone, killed Wallace Sinclair!"

Her expression changed.

From the half-sneering look of the cynic, her face assumed the expression of a fury.

Slowly unfolding her arms, she glared at the little lawyer, and ground her teeth.

"You lie!" she hissed through her clinched teeth.

It was now the little lawyer's turn to smile.

He also chuckled, as he drew a note out of his pocket, and handing it to the woman, said:

"Read that, madam. See if that does not open your eyes a trifle."

The woman snatched the note, and the moment her eyes fell upon the writing she grew deathly pale.

When she had hurriedly perused the note she let it slip from her nerveless fingers and clutched her temples with her hands.

"Then it is true," she muttered in a broken voice, and would have fallen to the floor if McCoy had not supported her.

"Come, Bagley," he said, "get hold here and let us take her into the air."

Bagley obeyed, and the woman was assisted out of the room and out of the house.

As soon as they were gone, the detective stepped out of his hiding-place and picked up the note, which the woman had dropped, and which in their excitement, they had forgotten to take from the floor.

The note read as follows:

"MESSRS. MCCOY & BAGLEY:—

"GENTLEMEN:—The time has come when something definite must be done. You admit yourselves that there is little or no hope for me as long as Wallace lives. Then, why not put him out of the way? You may think this is a plain way of putting it, but I am nothing if not frank, and I do not believe in beating about the bush when anything is to be done or said.

"Let your man—the one of whom you spoke—go with me, and if he hasn't nerve enough, I will do the job myself.

"Respectfully,

"W. GLOWERS."

"Well," mused the detective, "this is pretty rich. That fellow must be a lunatic to write such a letter as that to anybody, especially such people as these lawyers."

Thad had barely finished his soliloquy, when he heard footsteps, and he had no more than recovered his hiding-place when the two lawyers returned without the woman.

"It is worse than useless to look through that cabinet again," observed Bagley, "and I see no use of doing it. She will be just as well satisfied if we tell her that we have gone through it again."

"No, we have given her our promise, and must do it," responded McCoy. "Besides, there is no telling but we might run across the paper in question."

"There is no danger of that, for I do not believe the paper is in existence. If the old gentleman ever framed such a document, he probably destroyed it before he died, if he

hated the boy as ardently as they say he did."

"At all events, I shall make another search," said McCoy, "whether you take part in it or not."

"Oh, well, if you are so conscientious in the matter, I will assist you, although, as I said before, it is an arrant waste of time."

With that the two lawyers went to work silently examining the contents of the cabinet again.

After an hour or more devoted to this occupation, they were compelled to give up in despair.

"Just as I thought," observed Bagley. "All our time wasted to no purpose."

"At all events," retorted the other, "our conscience will be easy on the subject."

Bagley laughed.

"Much your conscience troubles you, I suppose," remarked Bagley, with a sneer.

"Oh, as to that I guess we are about quits, Bagley, except that I never actually took personal part in a cold-blooded murder."

"No, of course not. You are too great a coward for that. You much prefer hiring some cut-throat to do your dirty work for you—some low-born cur that you would not speak to on the street, and then go to his den and hob-nob with him."

"Certainly. Why not?" said McCoy, sarcastically. "I don't mind giving you an order, some time, when you are at leisure."

This was too much for the fiery little lawyer.

He glared at the tall man for a moment as though he would have enjoyed eating him, and then making a dart at him caught him by the collar.

"Don't speak to me like that, sir!" he roared. "I won't have it! I won't have it!"

"Go away!" shouted the tall man. "Don't dare to lay your hands upon my person, sir! I'm liable to do you an injury."

The two rascals fumed about for some time, and just as Thad was expecting to see them come to blows, they each seemed to suddenly discover that he was in the wrong.

After which both apologized, and shook hands, and each declared that he had never met anybody for whom he entertained the same affection as he did for the other.

Having arrived at this stage of the game, they decided to make another search for the missing document, which they did with the same result as before.

And then they suddenly discovered that the letter from Walter Glowres was missing, and they made a search for that. But, as they could not find it, they concluded that the Glowres woman had it.

"That is devilish unfortunate," observed McCoy. "With that letter in our possession, we had her at our mercy; but now that she has it in her possession, she has us in about the same predicament."

"Do you imagine she will go back on us now, after what she promised?" interrogated Bagley.

"It is hard to tell what that woman will do. She thought her son was in danger at the time she made the promise a while ago; but when she discovers that she has the letter incriminating him, she may change her mind."

"I am surprised that you should have let her go off with the letter," snarled Bagley.

"And I am surprised that you should have given it to her in the first place," snorted McCoy.

"That was a piece of stratagem to bring her to terms when she was about to kick over the traces."

"I understand. The motive was well enough; but it is unfortunate that it resulted as it did. It may upset all our plans. Of course, we could not blame her for being shocked at our methods of doing business, but she will have to get used to that if she wishes to transact business with us. Eh, Bagley?"

"Well, I should say she would. But if she is so touchy on that point, I wonder what she will say when she knows how the old man was got out of the way."

"That will shock her sensibilities," laughed McCoy.

"Well, I do not see that there is any use of tarrying here any longer," remarked Bagley, "and we may as well go."

"Yes, let us go."

And the two worthies took their departure, greatly to Thad's relief, for he was getting sorely tired of standing in one position.

But he had no more than come out of his hiding-place when the sound of other footsteps caused him to retreat into it again.

He had barely time to conceal himself again when the door opened and in came Walter Glowres and Ida Marlowe!

CHAPTER XXI.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

As soon as Ida Marlowe reached the middle of the room, she turned to her companion and began:

"Now, sir, that I have met you here as you requested, what do you want?"

"Ida!" returned Walter, in a gentle voice, approaching the girl, "why do you persist in your coldness to me, when you know how madly I love you?"

The girl gave him a look of utter scorn.

"That you love me, supposing that such a thing is possible with you, is no concern of mine. I am sure that I cannot help it. If I could, nothing would give me greater pleasure. The reason for my coldness is equally quite beyond my power, for I can no more help hating you than water can avoid running down-hill."

"Why do you hate me, Ida?"

"Because there is not one lovable trait in your composition, Walter Glowres!" she answered, vehemently.

He was silent a moment, and his face turned alternately scarlet and pallid.

At length, with his lips trembling with pent-up rage, he turned upon her.

"The day will come, miss, and not very far distant, when you will regret this insult. You imagine that I am still the portionless outcast that I once was, but you are mistaken. Do you know, miss, that this house, this property, and indeed every roof that covers your head belongs to me?"

"I certainly do not."

"Then, allow me to inform you that such is the case."

The girl laughed scornfully.

"Ah, you may laugh," he continued.

"But you will laugh in a different key pretty soon. You can think only of that cur, Wallace Sinclair, at present, but the time will come when you will despise the pauper."

"How dare you speak of that noble young man like that in my presence?"

It was now Walter's turn to laugh scornfully.

"I would a thousand times rather marry him, even if he were the pauper that you say he is, than to marry you with a million."

"Enough of this!" cried Glowres, white and trembling with rage. "Ida Marlowe, there is no alternative for you but to marry me. Do you hear?"

"The idea!" she laughed.

"Do you know what it is to scorn me in that manner, miss?"

"Yes, it is to spurn a puppy."

"Have a care. You shall rue this. Now, I want to tell you plainly that unless you consent to marry me before you leave this room, you and your aunt shall be turned out of doors before to-morrow night."

Again she laughed.

"One would imagine to hear you talk that you really had the power to do what you say."

"And you think that I have not?"

"I know you have not."

The young man coolly drew a document from his bosom and handed it to her.

"Read that, and see what you think of the situation."

She glanced over the document, and turned pale.

"What is this? 'Wallace Sinclair, in consideration of favors received, hereby relinquishes his claim to the estate of the late Commodore Marlowe. And furthermore, not desiring to make a pauper of her, he also resigns whatever claim he may ever have had to the hand and heart of Ida Marlowe, all in favor of Walter Glowres!'"

She raised her eyes from the paper and glared at the young man for a moment.

She then tore the document to fragments, threw them upon the floor and stamped upon them.

"What do you mean?" shouted the infuriated Glowers. "You have destroyed the only title I have to these vast estates."

"Oh, well, you can have another made the same as this one was," she laughed.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that that paper was a forgery! Wallace Sinclair would never have signed such a thing."

"Why not?"

"Because he is too much of a man."

"That is why he signed it. He was desirous of acquitting himself of the debt he owed me."

"He never owed you a cent, and you shall answer for this base slander as soon as I have a chance to see him."

The young man laughed derisively.

"That will never be."

"What do you mean?"

"Wallace Sinclair is dead!"

She scanned his face for an instant:

"That is as base a lie as that paper on the floor!"

"I am glad you think so," he chuckled.

"But I'm afraid you will change your mind before long. By the way, here is a token he gave me to bring to you with his dying breath."

So saying, he handed her a small locket.

The moment the girl's eyes fell upon the trinket, she turned ghastly pale.

She put her hand to her brow, and seemed on the point of reeling to the floor.

"Yes, yes," she muttered, half-inaudibly, "it is the locket that I gave him when we were children, and which he promised never to part with as long as he lived, and that, if I survived him, wherever I might be, he would send me that keepsake as the last act of his life. Then what you tell me is really true?"

"Certainly."

"And why did you keep it from me so long?"

"I did not like to hurt your feelings, Ida. I was in hopes that you would accept me, in consideration of the advantages you would derive thereby, and then I thought that when we were happy together I would tell you the sad story of his last moments. Of how I nursed him and shared my own slender store with him, for he was penniless, and all for your sake."

"Oh, why did you not let me know that he was ill and in want, when I could have made him so comfortable, perhaps saved his life?"

"Because he did not want you to know it. It was his last request that I should not let you know how miserable he was. And do you know why?"

"To save my feelings, the generous, noble boy," sobbed the girl.

"Nothing of the kind," retorted the young scoundrel. "It was because he knew that you loved him, while he despised you, and he desired that you should forget him."

"That is a lie!"

"Is it? Then how is it that he never came to see you? How is it that he did not even let you know his address? Does that look as though he loved you?"

The girl could make no reply, but her frame shook with her sobs.

"Little did he care what distresses you underwent," continued the young man. "When your uncle died, and the family was distracted over the mysterious apparitions and sounds in the house to the extent of having to leave it, and when you needed the strong arm of a man in the household, he was in Brooklyn all the time, and yet he never came to you to offer his consolation."

"On the other hand, while I was in the far West, and had very little money to spare for traveling, as soon as I heard that the old gentleman was dead I came on at once."

The girl still stood, with her face buried in her hands, and sobbing convulsively.

He was also silent for some time and watched her.

Finally he imagined he had worked upon her feelings enough to make another move.

Approaching her, he attempted to put his arm around her waist.

Quicker than lightning she raised her head and spurned him from her.

"Do not dare to touch me!" she cried. "I hate you worse now than ever!"

"In that case I shall not spare you, as I contemplated doing," he rejoined, coolly.

"Know, then, that you have got to be my wife whether you wish it or not."

"What?" she cried scornfully.

"I mean what I say."

"I will die first!"

"That is exactly what you will do unless you marry me. You shall never leave this room alive unless you promise to marry me."

The girl attempted to pass, and he stepped in her road.

"Let me pass, coward!" she exclaimed.

"Never!"

And he drew a long, shining blade and raised it over her.

"Swear that you will be my wife, or I will plunge this knife into your heart!"

"Coward! You dare not!"

"Do you think that I do not dare to do it? Do you know who killed old Marlowe? It was I!"

She quailed before him.

His threats up to that time had had no effect upon her, and even the sight of the naked steel did not dampen her courage, because she knew him to be an arrant coward.

But there is something so horrible, so loathsome in the personality of a murderer, that humanity shudders at it or turns from it in disgust.

The fellow laughed at her fear.

"Ah-ha, I thought that would bring you to your senses. And do you know why I murdered him?"

She shook her head.

"Because I loved you, and hoped thereby to gain your hand, by obtaining his property. Now do you understand now strongly I love you? Do you imagine that that miserable coward of a lover of yours would ever have dared to do such a thing?"

This aroused the girl's passion.

For the instant she forgot her fear even of this self confessed assassin.

Drawing herself up before him, she hissed:

"No, he would never have done it, because it was the act of a coward like yourself. You would never have dared to kill an able-bodied man when he had an equal show with yourself."

"Wouldn't I?"

"No. You would not have dared to meet even the old gentleman face to face like a man, but you resorted to poison, like the cowardly assassin that you are."

Her very bravery dampened his courage, and he lowered his knife.

"You would not speak to me thus, Ida, if you did not know that I love you too fondly to harm you."

She smiled triumphantly.

"No, that is not the reason," she said.

"What is it, then?"

"You fear the result."

"What result should I fear?" he uttered, desperately. "Without you I had rather be hanged a thousand times."

"It is not the fear of being hanged, sir, but the fear of the just punishment you will receive from the man you have so cruelly maligned, the vengeance of a brave, honorable man."

"To whom do you refer?" he sneered.

"Wallace Sinclair."

"He is dead, I told you!"

"And I do not believe a word of it."

"And I will bear you witness, Ida."

Both turned at the sound of the voice, and beheld Wallace Sinclair in the flesh.

"Wallace!" cried Ida.

"Ida!" exclaimed the young man.

And then turning upon the now cowering Glowers, he ejaculated:

"So this is the way you have been winning Ida over to me and paving the way for my own personal visits, is it? This is the foundation of the stories you have been telling me about Ida's sudden distrust of me and her refusal to see me until I was sure of the estate? Hound that you are, stand off there till I kill you!"

With that the young man drew a revolver and aiming it at the still cringing figure, fired.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE LAW.

WALLACE SINCLAIR'S aim was good, and he evidently meant business, but he did not hit his mark.

The reason of it was, that the detective sprung out of his place of concealment just

in the nick of time to strike his hand up, and prevent murder.

"Have you forgotten what I told you?" asked the detective, addressing Sinclair.

The young man stared at him in surprise.

"Who are you?" he finally interrogated.

"Sharpe."

The young man changed color.

"I had not forgotten it, sir," he answered.

"But the provocation was too great to endure."

"I admit that the provocation was strong, but you should never lose your presence of mind, young man."

Thad then turned and looked at Glowers for the first time.

That young man was a pitiful sight.

He was the picture of abject terror.

His eyes were riveted upon the face of the detective as though he had been some supernatural apparition.

"Well, young man," began Thad, "what have you to say for yourself, sir?"

Glowers was silent and bent his head.

"You, and your friend Tiger did not quite succeed in accomplishing your purpose that night, did you?"

The young man looked up in surprise.

He did not dream that this man, whom he knew to be a detective, and the murderous-looking ruffian who had knocked the Tiger senseless, were one and the same.

"You are a little surprised to see me, I take it, as you were on the night that you and your pal attempted to murder this young man. You are surprised that I should have been present to hear you confess the crime of murdering your own father."

"What?"

This exclamation came from all three.

From Ida and Glowers, because it was new to them, and from Sinclair because he was surprised and chagrined that the detective should have, as he supposed, betrayed his confidence.

Thad saw how the young man viewed the matter, and hastened to explain.

"Oh, I am not betraying your confidence, old fellow, in this matter, for I have my information from a different source. This source also yields other information, which will be a surprise to all of you, I think."

Thad then drew out the will which he had discovered behind the drawer of the cabinet.

Handing it to Wallace Sinclair, he said:

"Read that, my boy, and then say whether you do not bless me for preventing you from committing the murder you just now attempted."

By this time Wallace had read enough of the document to understand what its purport was.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Can this be true?"

"What is that, Wallace?" asked Ida.

"According to this document Walter and I are brothers, and the old commodore was our father."

"What?" almost shrieked Walter.

"Read it for yourself," said Wallace, handing him the paper.

The other snatched the document with a nervous hand, and with wild-staring eyes began the perusal of the document.

The next moment the paper slipped from his nerveless fingers, and clasping his hands to the sides of his head, he groaned:

"Then I have murdered my own father!"

And sunk to the floor in a swoon.

"And I came very near being the murderer of my own brother!" exclaimed Wallace Sinclair, in a frantic voice.

Wallace then sunk down over his swooning brother, and took his hand in his own.

"Oh, Walter!" he cried, "you knew I always loved you as a brother. Something always told me that you were nearer to me than others, long before I came to the age of discretion, and even after you tried to murder me, I refused to betray you. My God!" he suddenly exclaimed, springing to his feet.

"He is dead!"

"Dead?" cried Ida, approaching the prostrate man and staring at him with a frightened face.

"Dead?" said the detective, stooping over him.

Thad examined the young man's pulse and placed his hand over his heart, and then arose with a solemn face.

"Too true," he affirmed. "He is dead. Broke a blood-vessel no doubt in his excite-

ment. "Ah, well, it is probably better that way. He would not have had long to live anyway. But he has robbed the gallows."

Mr. Sharpe, protested Wallace, "please spare my feelings by not referring to my brother's errors now that he is no more. Nobody knows better than I how prone to evil he was, but there is a consolation in knowing that he will sin no more, and we will show but Christian charity by sparing his memory."

"Pardon me, my boy. I did not think of what I was saying, in my excitement. You will hear no more reproaches of the poor fellow from me I assure you."

And Thad grasped the young man's hand warmly.

"I think that it would be better for you and the young lady to go," continued the detective. "I will take the responsibility of seeing that the remains are properly taken care of."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Mr. Sharpe," responded Wallace, "for your kindness. But I trust that, inasmuch as my brother was not a prisoner at the time of his death, he will be treated as a free man, notwithstanding his crime."

"Oh, certainly. No account will be taken of his past life. I will merely get an undertaker to take charge of the remains and notify the coroner."

"Thank you," returned Wallace. Good-by, Mr. Sharpe."

"Good-by, my boy, and God bless you."

When Wallace and Ida had gone the detective straightened the body of the young man out, crossed the hands over the breast, and then locking the door of the room, left the house.

He then procured a cab and drove to the residence of Mrs. Marlowe, where he related the circumstances of the tragedy, and procured a key to the house where it occurred from the old lady, the niece not having arrived yet.

After which he called upon the coroner and an undertaker, and having attended to these matters, he returned to the Marlowe residence.

"I want to ask you, Mrs. Marlowe," observed the detective as soon as he had been ushered into the parlor, "where your late husband is buried."

The old lady looked at him in surprise.

"Why do you want to know that?" she asked.

"Because, from what I can glean, it appears that your husband died from the effects of some subtle poison, and it will be necessary to have an examination to ascertain whether this is true or not."

"This cannot be done, sir—"

"I understand that it is repugnant to you, and if I can prove the points which I desire to, I will not resort to it," interrupted the detective.

"What I was about to say," resumed the lady, "is that the body cannot be examined for the reason that it was cremated, in accordance with my husband's wish."

"Indeed? Then there is no use of proceeding in that direction. And there is no need of it anyway, as we know who the murderer is without it."

"You do?"

"Yes, madam."

"Who is it?"

"Walter Glowers."

"Impossible."

"Why impossible, madam?"

"He was three thousand miles away when it occurred."

"Are you sure of this?"

"As sure as one can be of anything. The night the old gentleman passed away, Walter's mother telegraphed to him, and I saw the reply. Besides, I have met at least two people who knew him in the West, and know that he was there at that time."

"Might not his mother, whom you think guilty, have concocted this whole thing to prevent her son from being suspected?"

"No, I do not think that possible. The persons who saw him West could not be bribed to commit perjury by her or anybody else. One is a gentleman whom I have known many years, and the other is his wife, both of whom I can conscientiously trust."

"So you still believe the young man's mother to be the guilty party, do you?"

"Yes, sir, and always shall."

"We shall see," mused the detective. "Do you remember of telling me that she had gone to Europe the other day, madam?"

"I certainly have not forgotten it."

"Well, of course you know now that she has not gone?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

"Has not your niece mentioned the fact to you?"

"No, sir."

"That is strange. She knew it."

"Impossible. If she had known it, she certainly would have told me about it."

"My dear lady, it pains me to create differences in a family, but you will pardon me for saying that I saw your niece and Herme Glowers in the same carriage yesterday."

The lady was dumfounded.

She stared at the detective in blank astonishment.

"Are you sure it was Herme? Might you not have been mistaken, only seeing her in a passing carriage?" she interrogated at length.

"Possibly I might, if I had merely seen her in a passing carriage; but I saw more of her than that."

Thad then related the circumstances of the pursuit and final upsetting of the carriage.

"If this be true," observed the lady at the conclusion of the narration, "I shall severely reprimand my niece for keeping this from me, as soon as I see her."

"You had better do it now, then, auntie," came a musical voice, and the young lady herself burst into the room.

Nor was she alone. Wallace Sinclair was with her.

The old lady looked up in surprise, and so delighted was she to see Wallace that she forgot her anger at her niece.

"Wallace, my boy!" she cried, in the wildest joy, clasping him to her bosom. "Why have you remained away from us so long?"

"Mother!" exclaimed the young man, frantic with joy, "forgive me, but when you know all you will not blame me."

He then proceeded to relate how he had been led by Walter to believe that the family were all down on him, and that they never desired to see him any more. That he (Walter) was gradually winning them over to him, and that he had long wished for the day when he could return with the prospect of receiving a welcome.

"Well, you are welcome," cried the old lady, shedding tears of joy, and clasping him to her bosom again. "You know that I always loved you as though you had been my own son."

"I know that, mother, and now I have another surprise for you."

"What is that, Wallace?"

"A very sad one, to me, at least," continued the young man. "Walter and I were brothers."

"You don't tell me!" ejaculated the old lady. "I always wondered why you looked so much alike."

Wallace thought it best not to say who the father was, at that time, as it would only sadden her life, which for the moment, was particularly happy, so he merely said:

"Yes, it is sad for me to know this in the face of what has happened. You knew, of course, mother, that Walter is dead, and that he had confessed to the murder of poor father?"

"Yes, my boy, I heard this. But, allow me to say that I do not believe the latter."

"Oh, thank you, mother!" cried the young man, ecstatically. "You are the first one to offer me any consolation. Neither do I believe he committed the murder, mother!"

And mother and son were once more locked in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DISAPPOINTED CORONER.

FOR some moments the lady and her adopted son remained locked in each other's embrace; then they resumed conversation.

"Whom do you believe to be guilty, of the crime, mother?" asked Wallace.

"Nobody could have been guilty of it except Herme Glowers, my dear son."

"My opinion exactly," he rejoined.

"And that reminds me," continued Mrs. Marlowe, "to ask you, Ida, if it is true, as this gentleman thinks, that you were out riding with that woman yesterday."

"Yes, auntie," replied the young lady, "it is true."

"How is it you did not mention the fact to me?"

"Because she requested me not to do so. You see, auntie, I thought, as you also did, that she had gone to Europe, and I was coming from my music lesson and met her. At least she came by in a carriage, and seeing me, called to me. I was greatly surprised at seeing her, and when she asked me to ride, I accepted."

"But why did she not want you to tell me of the circumstance?"

"Because she said that as she had already bidden you farewell, she did not want to subject you to the same melancholy scene again."

"That was not her reason, of course; but, where is the woman now, Ida?"

"Oh, she is gone now, for sure. She was to go last night at ten o'clock. That is, she was to go aboard at that time, as the ship was to sail at six this morning. And that is what kept me out so late. She was riding about the city to kill time till she had to go."

"Pardon me, Miss Marlowe," interposed Thad, "but did she explain to you why she went to the house on Thirty-fourth street, and compelled a woman who was stopping there to accompany her in the carriage?"

"Why, sir, she did not compel the lady to go with her!" declared the girl. "She did not know that this lady was stopping there, until we drove by, and the lady came out and called to her. Herme stopped to see what the lady wanted, and when she came up to the carriage we saw that it was the woman who had nursed uncle while he was ill. She said that she was nursing a lady there, at that house, but had nothing to do that afternoon, and begged Herme to let her have a ride."

"Where did she go after she left you?" inquired the detective.

"I do not know, sir. Herme let her out at Fourteenth street and Sixth avenue, where she said she wanted to take the Elevated train, but she did not say where she was going."

"Did Herme explain to you why she was racing so to keep out of sight of the cab that was following her?"

"No, sir, except that she said she wanted to avoid the person in the cab who persisted in following her carriage."

"She had no idea why he was following her, I presume?"

"She did not say positively, but she led us to infer that she did not, and we took it for granted that she considered the person in the cab a very troublesome person, whom it was better to avoid."

"Did it not occur to you as a little strange, under the circumstances, that she did not call a policeman, and have the troublesome person arrested, instead of racing from one end of the city to the other to avoid him?"

"I did think it strange, and even suggested this, but she said it would only create a scene; and besides, we would all be dragged into a police court the next morning. So I begged her not to do it."

"She is a very cunning woman, Mrs. Marlowe," remarked the detective, addressing the old lady. "And I begin to share your opinion that she is the guilty party. It is unfortunate that I did not arrest her yesterday. But if I had stopped to do that, your son here would have been a dead man to-day, instead of alive to bless you."

"Yes, mother," interpolated the young man, "this gentleman saved my life last night."

"Indeed? How was that, my son?"

Wallace then related the particulars of the plot to take his life, and the detective's timely arrival and heroism; but he avoided saying anything about Walter being mixed up in it.

Thad then took his leave, and each one of the family shook him warmly by the hand and thanked him for his earnest work in the case.

"If you can only unvail the mystery of the ghost," remarked the old lady, "we will look upon you, sir, as the greatest benefactor the family has ever had."

"I trust I shall not be long in running the ghost down," replied the detective, smiling, and at the same time looking hard at Ida.

But the young lady met his gaze without flinching, and he came to the conclusion that

she either possessed a good deal of boldness, or else she was not, as he imagined, the ghost.

At the same time, remembering the imprint of the hand upon the cabinet, he glanced at Ida's hand, and was rather disappointed at seeing no ring upon her right forefinger, and also that her hand was much larger than the one that had made the impression in the dust of the cabinet.

This set him to thinking, as he made his way toward his studio, and when he had reasoned it all out, he decided that Ida could not be the one who was playing this ghost farce.

But, at this point he remembered about finding the young lady in the cataleptic state, and concluded that whoever the person was, she was, of all things, not a practical joker.

It was now late in the afternoon, and the detective felt that he had a great deal of work before him yet that night.

In the first place, he must discover whether Herme Glowlers had really sailed for Europe or not, and if she had not, to hunt her up and arrest her.

In the next place he desired to find the nurse, and if she could not give a satisfactory account of herself, to arrest her, also.

With these thoughts and plans in his mind, Detective Burr reached his apartments on Thirteenth street.

As he approached the place he noticed a couple of men standing in front, and looking anxiously toward him as he neared the house.

When he got a little nearer he found it to be the coroner whom he had notified, and the undertaker.

He saw that they wore very far from pleased expressions, and he wondered what the cause could be.

"What is the matter, gentlemen?" he asked, as soon as he was near enough.

"That is a pretty question to ask," retorted the coroner.

"I should say so," added the undertaker.

"That was a fine trick to play upon us," continued the coroner, angrily.

"I do not understand you, gentlemen. Please explain."

"Where is the subject you sent me to look after?" demanded the coroner.

"Yes, where is the body I was to lay out and embalm?" queried the undertaker.

"Didn't you find it in the vacant house, Number 13, as I told you?" inquired the detective, curiously.

"We did not," rejoined the coroner. "All we found was an empty house, apparently, as you told us, but no corpse. And then, when we commenced looking about for one, we were almost frightened out of our wits by hearing the most unearthly screams we ever heard in our lives."

"I see how it was," observed Thad, laughing. "You went there and let the ghost frighten you off before you had time to find the remains."

"Ghost?" cried both men in a chorus, growing very pale.

"Yes. Didn't you know that the house was haunted?"

"No. That is what we heard then," said the undertaker.

"Nevertheless, we looked in the room you said—second floor front, before we left," insisted the coroner.

"Come, go back with me, and I'll guarantee that we will find the corpse," observed the detective, starting off toward Eighth avenue.

The two followed, and when they reached the avenue they took a down-town car.

In the course of fifteen minutes they arrived at Greenwich Village, and in a few minutes thereafter were at the old house.

"Now, look out for yourselves, boys," warned the detective, as he unlocked the front door.

The two looked a little frightened, but followed Thad into the hall.

"In here is where we seemed to hear the screaming," remarked the coroner, pointing to the front room down-stairs.

"Oh, it's liable to be anywhere," rejoined Thad.

Without further conversation the three ascended to the second floor, and Thad proceeded to unlock the door of the front room.

"How came that door locked, I wonder?" asked the coroner, with a frightened expression.

"Why, didn't you lock it when you left?" inquired the detective.

"No, indeed. We were too much frightened about that time," declared the coroner.

"The only explanation is that there has been somebody here," and with that Thad threw open the door and the three men strode in.

By that time it had grown pretty dark, and the detective walked to the window and opened the shutters to admit the light.

When he had done so and turned to look for the corpse of the young man, he was astonished to find that it was not there.

Thad did not know what to make of its disappearance.

Who could have taken it away?

And then an idea occurred to him.

The mother, Herme Glowlers, might have taken it away.

That accounted for the door being locked.

But then, when the coroner and undertaker were questioned, they both declared that they had gone over every inch of the floor before they left.

If this was true, the door must have been locked after they left and consequently not at the time at which the corpse was removed.

But what puzzled the detective most was how anybody, especially the woman, could have got the body out of the house without attracting a good deal of attention about the neighborhood, and had such a thing been done, he would certainly have heard something about it ere this.

At this point he recalled how suddenly the Glowlers woman had disappeared the first time he had seen her and attempted to follow her, and it occurred to him that possibly the remains of the young man had been concealed in the house somewhere.

These thoughts flitted rapidly through the detective's head while he was looking about for the corpse.

"Well, you see it is as we said," observed the coroner. "The subject is not here."

"So I see," assented Thad. "And I have been puzzling my head over how it got away from here."

"Somebody that is interested has taken it away," was the undertaker's opinion.

"Nobody supposed that it walked away," retorted the coroner.

"What puzzles me is how anybody could have got it out of the house without attracting the attention of the neighbors, who are watching the house like hawks since it was reported to be haunted, and if they had seen anything we would have heard of it before this."

"Well, what do you conclude then?" asked the coroner.

"That it is still in the house," replied Thad. "And I propose that we find it."

The two men consented to assist in the search, and they went at it in earnest.

The first place the detective went was into the rear bedroom, which he found locked, and he had to resort to his skeleton key to get the door open.

Here he found everything disarranged since he was there before. The bed had evidently been occupied, although it had only been a few hours since he had last seen it, and at that time it did not seem as though any one had been in the room for a week.

But a thorough search of the room failed to reveal the presence of anybody, dead or alive.

After examining the room carefully, the detective opened the sham cabinet, which opened into the secret passage, and first traversed the passage into the front room, and afterward to the basement, but all to no purpose.

Every part of the house was searched the same way. Closets, pantries, secret passages, tunnels—and they found no end of the latter—were all searched, but nothing was found.

It was far in the night when the men finished their work, and like every one that seeks for a thing in vain, they were disgusted.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NO WONDER HE DISAPPEARED.

As the detective had work to do which re-

quired that he should not be recognized as Thaddeus Burr, he went directly to his apartments as soon as he left the house in Greenwich Village, and disguised himself as a well-to-do middle-aged gentleman, with iron-gray hair and whiskers, and a pair of gold-bowed spectacles.

As he sallied forth in this make-up, it occurred to him that he had eaten nothing since early morning, and he stopped in a restaurant on Broadway to get his dinner. It was about nine o'clock, and after taking the meal rather leisurely, it was nearly ten when he reached the street again.

Thad paused for a moment in front of the restaurant to consider which way to go first, and was in that dreamy, half-conscious state peculiar to him when engaged in deep thought, and was watching the passers-by without really realizing that he saw them, when, all of a sudden, a face floated by that recalled him to consciousness.

At first he was not sure it was not a part of a fanciful dream, and then, when he did come to realize that he had actually seen it, with his physical eyes, he was for the instant unable to place the face.

He knew he had seen it somewhere, and that it was in some way associated with trouble and crime, but where and under what circumstances he had beheld it, the confusion of the first few seconds precluded his determining.

But this was for an instant only. The next moment it was all clear to him. It was the face of Herme Glowlers!

And she was accompanied by a man, something remarkable for her, and the unfortunate part of it was, the detective did not catch a glimpse of her escort's face.

Thad wondered who the man could be, but he did not wait there to ponder over the problem, for at once he decided to pursue.

As he went along he could not help thinking of the cunning of this woman.

The fact of her pretending that she was going to sail for Europe, and then not go, was clearer proof to Thad that she was a guilty woman than if she had actually gone.

If she had departed, it would not necessarily have proved her guilt, for she might have had urgent business that called her abroad; but, the fact of her hiding from her own friends in the same city, was extremely suspicious.

In the mean time he was pursuing his way after the woman and her unknown escort, who had gained something like a half a block upon him before he started after them.

However, a few minutes' rapid walking brought him in sight of the pair, and a few more minutes brought him almost alongside; but he did not desire to get close enough to attract the woman's attention, knowing her sagaciousness as he did.

From this point he could plainly see the woman's face, so that he could not be mistaken as to identity, but for some reason he could not get sight of the man's face. And then a nearer approach revealed the fact that the man had his face muffled in such a way that it was impossible to recognize him.

Thad concluded, therefore, to shadow the pair, instead of arresting the woman, as he had at first contemplated doing, and ascertain where they were going.

As their course was down-town, the only place where he could imagine they were going was Greenwich Village.

But what puzzled him was that they should be walking.

His mind was soon set at rest on this point, however, for they had gone but a little way when, after pausing for a moment as though undecided as to which way to proceed, the man called a hack and they got in and drove off.

Thad was not far behind them.

They were scarcely on their way before he was seated in a cab following them.

The carriage rolled on down-town, and soon left Broadway and turned west.

This convinced the detective that his first theory about their destination being Greenwich Village, was correct.

A few minutes later they had reached Fourth street where it makes the curve and runs over into the village, and Thad saw the hack drive up in front of Number 13 and stop.

The two passengers alighted and approached the house.

Now was the detective's time to do some lively work.

He must reach the rear of the house, enter the tunnel and ascend the secret passage before they got up-stairs, if possible, otherwise he stood a chance of being discovered.

Therefore, as soon as their backs were toward him, the detective took advantage of the darkness to glide around to the rear of the house and, after entering the tunnel in the basement, made his way rapidly to the second floor.

He did not attempt to pass out into the hall and enter the front room, but kept straight on through the passage until he arrived in the niche where he saw the dead girl on the occasion of his first visit to the house.

From here he could hear everything that went on; the only trouble being that he could not see.

Thad soon solved this problem, however, by whipping out his knife, and slashing a small hole through the canvas door to his hiding-place.

He had no more than accomplished this feat than the two people entered the room.

As soon as they were inside, the man said: "Thank God, there is no longer any necessity for my keeping this thing over my face." And with that he took off the muffer which concealed his features.

The detective was astonished when he saw who it was.

It was none other than Walter Glowers, whom Thad had thought dead.

The fellow indulged in a low, triumphant chuckle.

"Pretty well played upon my detective," he observed. "Only for my timely fit I would now be languishing in prison."

"Yes, these terrible cataleptic fits of yours, which I have dreaded so all my life, served a good purpose for once, my son. But tell me, how came you to say you committed the murder? I knew that you did not."

"Do not ask me, mother. The events of the past three or four days are as a dream to me. It did not used to be so, but lately for several days preceding one of these fits, I am in a dreamy state, bordering upon insanity. Indeed, I have often feared that it would ultimately result in insanity."

"Then you have no recollection of writing the letter to these lawyers proposing the assassination of Wallace?"

"Certainly not. I have no recollection of having anything to do with these lawyers in any way. When I first returned from the West they came to me and laid a brilliant plot before me, by which they proposed to obtain the old commodore's property for me. I showed them the door. As you know, mother, I never had any desire to get possession of the property. The very idea of fighting over a dead man's property is repugnant to me. And yet, it seems that I must have gone to these same rascally lawyers and proposed the same thing that I had a few days before literally thrown them out of the house for proposing to me."

"Well, my boy, your disease has got us into a pretty muss this time, I must say. Here I have been running away from imaginary detectives, as well as real ones, on account of the stories you told me. Why, Mrs. Marlowe thinks at this very moment that I am on my way across the ocean."

"It is horrible!" exclaimed the young man, the tears starting in his eyes. "The only thing I regret is that I did not turn my villainy against myself and end all."

"My dear boy, you must not speak like that," implored his mother. "There is still hope that you may be cured of this terrible disease, and we will yet be happy."

"In the mean time how are we to extricate ourselves from this tangle into which I have got us?"

"My plan is this: First of all, hunt up this detective and explain the case to him. He will be more easily convinced than anybody else, on account of seeing you in one of your fits. And then if he wishes to arrest you, allow him to do so, and you can easily prove an *alibi* in the case of the old gentleman's murder."

"Yes, that is what I will do. I have the detective's card, though where I got it is a mystery to me now, and I will go to his place this very night. But what is this about Wallace and I being brothers?"

The woman was silent for some moments and appeared to be in deep reflection.

Finally she spoke:

"This is a thing that you should have known long ago. I have kept it away from you principally on account of shame, and partly out of regard to the old gentleman. Yes, my boy, Commodore Marlowe was your father."

The young man hung his head and was silent for a long time.

At length he raised his face to that of his mother and said:

"Mother, it is too late in the day to chide you now; besides, I could not hold any ill-will against you if I tried. Therefore, here is my hand. You are still mother to me. But now tell me: Wallace is not your son, is he?"

"No, my boy; he is the son of the housekeeper that preceded me, and who is dead now, but the commodore was his father."

"We are only half-brothers, then?"

"That is all."

"And yet we are enough alike to be twins."

"Yes, you were often mistaken for twins when you were both little boys."

"This is a strange coincidence. And the strangest thing about it is the fraternal love that has always existed between us. Ah, me," he sighed. "I am afraid that Wallace will never love me again after what I have done, or rather attempted."

"Oh, yes, he will, my boy. Wallace is too noble a fellow to harbor a grudge when he knows the truth."

"I hope so. But, mother, what is your theory in regard to this murder? And when did they begin to suspect that it was murder?"

"The first I heard of it was after the detective visited your Uncle Herman and pumped Heady about that and the ghost. As to my opinion of who did it, if it is murder, I do not know of but one person on the face of the globe who had enough ill-will against the old gentleman to murder him."

"And who is that?"

"This Mrs. Beech, who nursed him during his last illness."

"Why do you think that she would have done such a thing, mother?" asked Walter.

"I don't say she would have done it or that she did. My opinion, if such it can be called, is founded entirely upon what I know to have passed between herself and the commodore and what I have heard her say. It seems that she was something of a beauty when she was young, and that the commodore met her at a watering-place and flattered her a good deal. Her mother kept a boarding-house at this watering-place, and so much did the old gentleman (he was not old then, however, it being twenty odd years ago) seem to think of the young lady that he took his two infant boys there to board while they were sick, and the young lady nursed them till they died."

"It is a strange coincidence, mother, that the same woman should have nursed the father till he died. I wonder if her nursing did not have something to do with the death of the infants as well as the old gentleman."

"Possibly. But it seems that she did not suspect that he was married until he brought the children, and she was foolish enough to expect a proposal from him. Since then she has entertained an inveterate grudge against him, and I have heard her say that only for him, she might have been a happy woman, and that she would enjoy nothing so much as choking the life out of him."

"Was she never married?"

"Oh, yes, but she married one of her own class, and her mind had been elevated so far above that by the commodore's flattery that she was never happy."

"Now, mother," interposed the young man, "now that we are here I see no good in looking for that will, for if this detective has possession of the other papers, he probably has that."

Before the woman had time to reply the detective pushed open the door of the niche, and said:

"I beg your pardon, but I have the papers you are looking for, and in lieu of the information you have furnished me, I hereby surrender them."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DYING WOMAN'S STORY.

THE mother and son were so startled by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the detective as to be unable to utter a word for a full minute.

At length, however, the young man found his tongue, and he gasped the one word:

"Detective!"

"Yes," responded Thad; "but after what I have heard, you need have no fear of the detective."

With that the detective sprang from the niche to the floor and grasped Walter by the hand.

"My young friend," said he, "nobody can be more gratified to find that you are innocent than I am and I am equally delighted to learn that your mother is innocent, for from what occurred within the past few days, we—that is, Mrs. Marlowe, Wallace and I—had made up our minds that she was the guilty party."

"I do not blame you, sir," rejoined the woman, "when I look back upon my conduct of the last two or three days. But you must blame this bad boy for it all."

"Yes, I am to blame for everything," interposed Walter; "or rather my infirmity is."

"Which is no fault of yours," said the detective. "You are more entitled to pity than blame. But now that we are here together where no one is likely to overhear our conversation, I should like to ask you a few questions, Miss Glowers."

"Proceed, sir," requested the woman. "I shall answer to the best of my ability."

"In the first place, I wish to ask whether you know the present whereabouts of this nurse of whom you were just speaking."

"I do not; although the last time I saw her, she was going to take an up-town train on the Sixth Avenue Elevated, and I shouldn't wonder if she had gone to Harlem, as she has a sister living there."

"I know she has. Another thing, if you please: When your carriage upset the other day, you were probably not aware of the fact, but I was on the spot. It was I who asked you if I could be of any assistance—"

"And I gave you a pretty short answer," she interrupted.

"Yes, but you were provoked. What I was going to say is, that she told me while you were engaged in having your carriage righted, that she was in your power, and did not dare to leave. The fact is, she had gone to my house for protection, as she was supposed to be in danger of her life at the hands of McCoy & Bagley, or their destroying angel, the man they call Tiger, and as soon as I discovered that she was gone, I naturally supposed that she had been abducted by some of these people. When I found her in your company, therefore, I inferred that you were the abductor, and pursued you accordingly. What are the facts, madam?"

"Simply this, as Ida Marlowe will verify: I was driving by the house on Thirty-fourth street, when I heard some one call my name. I looked in the direction, and was surprised to see that it was Mrs. Beech. She asked me to let her have a ride as she was nursing some one in the house, and had no chance to get out for fresh air, and I took pity on her and told her to get in. That is all there is to the story of my having her in my power."

"I am satisfied with your explanation, madam, especially as Miss Ida had already given it to me in nearly the same words. But now I would like to ask you what you know about this ghost, Miss Glowers."

"No more than you do yourself, sir."

"Which is nothing at all," rejoined Thad.

"The reason I asked you, and in fact, the reason I imagined you might know something about it, the first time I visited the house here you came in while I was concealed behind those curtains, and I saw you approach that niche and open it; then, to my surprise and horror, I beheld what appeared to be a corpse, and yet you appeared unmoved as though it had been the most commonplace sight in the world."

The woman smiled.

"And no wonder; I have seen the same thing an average of three times a week for the past year. At first it used to startle me, though I never was a person to go into hysterics like most women. The fact is, I

had so much to do to prevent the old lady from seeing the apparition that I had no time to think of myself. If she had ever caught sight of it as I have, she would have died on the spot."

"And you never investigated the matter far enough to discover what it was?"

"No, sir."

"Had you no theory on the subject?"

"Yes, at times I thought it might be Ida playing a prank upon us; but once I found the girl or ghost, whatever it is, in bed in the rear bedroom, and that time I mustered courage to feel her pulse, and she appeared to be dead. I said nothing to the family, but told my brother, who was butler, and we went back together to examine the girl, and to our horror, she was gone. Since then I have never had courage to enter that bedroom again, nor has any one else in the house."

"Well, it devolves upon me to discover the mystery after all. It is not essential to go to Harlem to-night, so I will go to-morrow. And now I will bid you good-night."

Early next morning the detective was up and made his preparations to go to Harlem, which included procuring a warrant for the arrest of the woman who had nursed the old gentleman, in case she could not satisfactorily answer the questions he should put to her.

By nine o'clock he was ready to go, and then the mail brought him this letter:

"MR. THADDEUS BURR, DETECTIVE:—

"DEAR SIR:—You will be surprised to receive this, and you never would have received it had it not been for an accident. When the carriage of Herme Glowers upset, I received internal injuries which the doctor thinks may result fatally. I have a statement to make before I die, and I would like to make it to you. But I want you, if possible, to bring with you the two young men known as Wallace Sinclair and Walter Glowers, as what I have to say chiefly concerns them. Come as soon as possible, as I feel that my time is short, and I do not want to die without unburdening my soul and doing justice to those I have wronged.

"Sincerely,
CATHERINE BEECH.
"No. — 135th St., Harlem."

As soon as the detective received this letter, he hurried out, procured a hack and drove to the residence of Mrs. Marlowe.

Here he was fortunate enough to find both brothers, and getting them into the hack, drove at once to Harlem.

Thad's ring at the bell was promptly answered, and in a few minutes the trio were ushered into the presence of the dying woman.

The big man who had ordered him out of the house on the previous visit, stopped the detective long enough at the door to apologize for his former conduct, and then said, with a dark glance toward the sick chamber:

"Bad business. These women is Old Ned when they gits started. I know, 'cause I'm married."

Thad seated himself by the bedside, and after some preliminary remarks, mostly of an apologetic nature, the woman began:

"When I was about eighteen I lived with my mother, who kept a boarding-house at Long Branch. The place was not as popular then as it is now, but a few people used to come there, and my mother, who was a widow, made out pretty well. One summer a young man (about thirty-five) came to my mother's house to board, and he appeared to take a great fancy to me. In fact, we became such good friends that I expected a proposal of marriage from him. But it never came, and at the end of the season he went away and I never heard from him again until the following season, when he came again, and this time he brought his wife and two children—twin boys—about a year old. You may perhaps imagine my feelings, when I did not know until that moment that he was married. I knew then for the first time that I was madly in love with him, or had been, and when I saw that he had a wife, my hate was a thousand times stronger than my love had been.

"Well, the twins were sick, and after remaining at the Branch for a week or so, his wife became dissatisfied and wanted to go somewhere else. The infants were not well enough to be moved, and my mother persuaded the lady to leave them with us and let us nurse them, which she readily consented to."

"The children improved rapidly and were

soon as well and robust as anybody could wish, and when we sent this report to the parents the father was so elated that he sent two other children down to us. These last two were also boys, and the children of the gentleman's housekeeper and his wife's maid. Before I proceed any further, let me say that this housekeeper was a Mrs. Sinclair, who had recently become a widow, and the lady's maid was Herme Glowers, who had never been married. The gentleman, it is needless to say, was Commodore Marlowe.

"So well satisfied were the parents with the treatment their children were receiving, that they allowed them to remain all winter and the next season while they were in Europe.

"The second season, however, the two children of the housekeeper and lady's maid died. Nobody knew anything about the children but myself, and when the two died a fiendish thought entered my head. Here was my opportunity for revenge upon the man who I considered had wronged me by not asking me to marry him. So instead of reporting that the two children belonged to the servants, I reported that it was the twins.

"The parents were in Europe at the time, but they had the children buried in their own private lot at Greenwood and their graves are marked with handsome monuments.

"In due time the real twins were returned to their supposed mother who brought them up, and they have been known ever since as Wallace Sinclair and Walter Glowers, when as a matter of fact, they were Albert and Francis Marlowe.

"Well, time wore on, and it chanced that I had an opportunity of nursing the old gentleman.

"There was nothing very serious the matter with him, and he undoubtedly would have got well, if it had not been that one night after he and I had been talking over the past, another fiendish notion came into my head.

"I was not satisfied with the wrong I had already done him and his, but I determined to kill him.

"I therefore administered a slow poison, which a doctor where I was nursing told me about, to him, and as soon as it began to take effect I told the story of the exchanging of the children, and then at his request, called in a notary public and a witness and had him make his will.

"All this time the old gentleman did not know that he was dying; but such is the effect of the drug in question, that the victim who has been unfortunate enough to take it, loses all will power, and becomes the slave of any one who cares to command him.

"Soon after completing the will the old gentleman became unconscious and remained so till he died.

"There is absolutely no truth in the story that I told you about Herme Glowers meeting the doctor and satisfying him as to the result of the death, no truth in the statement that they had a specialist, the regular family physician being in attendance all the time, and he was not called that night at all."

"Was no *post mortem* held?" interrupted the detective.

"Yes, but that did not reveal anything. The nature of this drug is such that nothing can be found in the victim's stomach."

"And there was no truth in the story about the ghost coming in and acting as you described, was there?"

"Yes, that much of it was true."

"But no other person was present at the old gentleman's death?"

"No, sir."

"Well, go on," requested the detective. "Is there anything more to tell?"

"Nothing, except to say that you will find the will behind the drawers of the cabinet. I put it there so that the lawyers would not find it."

"Very well; I found it," said Thad. "What connection had you with the lawyers, McCoy & Bagley, Mrs. Beech?"

"Nothing, only it was one of them that made out the will, and he was sharp enough to suspect that something was wrong, and pumped me to try to get a confession out of me. But I finally got rid of him by pretending that it was done by the order of Walter Glowers, and that is the reason that they de-

sired to get rid of me. They were afraid that I would expose them and their client."

The woman had now become very weak and for some time was silent.

Thad waited for her to resume her confession, but as she did not, he asked:

"Is that all, Mrs. Beech?"

She nodded affirmatively.

"Do you know nothing of the mystery of the ghost?"

She shook her head in the negative.

She soon became unconscious, and the detective notified the family, and then he and the two young men departed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MCCOY & BAGLEY.

WHEN the detective separated from his two young friends his first move was to repair to his own apartments on Thirteenth street for the purpose of disguising for a special mission.

The mission in question was a call upon the two swindling lawyers, McCoy & Bagley.

His motive for calling upon them was to obtain certain papers in their possession, if possible, and to learn what connection they had with the intended swindle of the insane young man.

For it was the opinion of the detective that these two rascals were at the bottom of the whole business.

He therefore lost no time in reaching his studio, and once there, proceeded to make himself up as an old hayseed from the country.

This done he made his way without delay to the office of the lawyers on Center street, near the Tombs prison.

He was fortunate enough to find the junior member of the firm in his office, to whom he introduced himself as Malon Swayback, from Red Bank, New Jersey.

Imagining he espied a victim, the wily lawyer received him most cordially.

"How do you do?" exclaimed the lawyer suavely. "What can I do for you?"

"Fact is," responded the alleged hayseed, "I've got er little business ter 'tend ter."

"Yes?" said the shark, eagerly.

"Yass. Ye see, me an' ole Commodore Marlowe was cousins; an' now that he's dead, I kinder 'spected he'd leave me suthin' in his will, an' es young Walter tole me jest 'while ago that you was tendin' ter the business connected with the estate, I kinder thought I'd jest come over an' hev er talk with yer."

The lawyer's brow clouded.

Any one with an eye could have seen at a glance that he had no more use for the supposed farmer.

His expected fee was not forthcoming, and why should he bother himself about the old mossback?

He turned upon the detective with a dark scowl.

"You are wasting your time looking for anything in that direction," said he in a cold, stern voice.

"Eh?"

And the detective opened his mouth very wide as well as his eyes, and stared at the lawyer.

"Yer don't mean to tell me—"

"Yes, I mean to tell you that you will never get a cent out of that estate, and the sooner you give up the notion of running after such ignis-fatuouses the better it will be for you."

"Look hiar, stranger," said Thad, with well-feigned anger, "I ain't never run arter nothin' o' the kind in my life, an' don't yer accuse me of it, nuther."

"You are an old jackass, sir!" snorted the lawyer.

"Look hiar, stranger," yelled the detective, jumping to his feet, and preparing to pull off his coat. "I don't take them words from nobody."

Bagley saw that he had made a mistake.

He became aware that he was dealing with the wrong party.

He turned a little pale when he saw what the alleged farmer was up to.

And he decided that peace was the best policy after all.

And that conciliation would be the wisest course to pursue with the fiery countryman. Therefore he apologized.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Swayback," he said, assuming a sweet expression of countenance. "I was too hasty. Still, as I said before, the estate of the old commodore is so involved that nobody will have much out of it."

"'Cept the lawyers, eh?"

"Well, the lawyers will have their due," responded Bagley with an innocent face.

"Which means 'bout all."

"Not necessarily."

"Who'll git the few cents left over arter the lawyers git their share?"

"The residue of the property after all debts are paid, will go to Walter Marlowe."

"The feller what murdered his own father, eh? Say, blame my cats, stranger, if I'd give that 'ere cuss a cent's worth."

This allusion to the murder was evidently a surprise to the lawyer, for he started violently and turned pale.

"What do ye know about that?" he demanded.

"I knows all 'bout it," replied Thad.

"Look here, old gentleman," said the lawyer confidentially, "if you expect to get anything out of that estate you'd better keep mum about that matter. If there should happen to be anything left after the estate is settled up I will do all in my power to see that you get your rights."

"Thanks," drawled the detective. "But say, why don't yer want me ter speak erbout Walter Marlowe murderin' his father?"

The lawyer shuddered again and looked frightened.

"Sh-s-s-sh!" he cried. "Somebody might hear you, old man, and it would be unpleasant for us."

"Not fer us, I reckon, but fer you."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Jest what I say. If that young man murdered his father he done it, 'cause yer put him up to it, that's what I mean."

The lawyer was worse frightened than ever.

He seemed to see something in the expression of the farmer which indicated that the latter knew more about the case than he cared to tell.

And Bagley appeared to be anxious to discover what it was, and yet he was afraid to venture a question for fear of inculpating himself.

Finally he said, however:

"What makes you think that Walter had anything to do with the murder, anyway, old gentleman?"

The detective looked at Bagley for an instant, as though he hardly comprehended what he had asked, and finally said, in a slow, drawling tone:

"Say, Mr. Lawyer, did yer know that that young man has fits?"

"No," replied Bagley. "What kind of fits?"

"I dunno what kind they be—that is, what they calls 'em; but he hes some kind, an' when they're onter him he thinks all sorts o' queer things, and says all sorts o' things, too. Now, when he come ter you an' hed yer ter forge that thar will, an' told yer that he'd killed his dad, he didn't know what he was a-sayin'. Fer the ole man made a will afore he died, givin' him half the property, an' if he murdered the ole man, he done it when he was out o' his head."

Of course, at that time Thad did not know who the murderer was, but still, he had no idea that the two lawyers had anything to do with it, further than encouraging the young man. And now that he was convinced that Walter had nothing to do with it, he could only suppose that the lawyers were implicated in the scheme, which the young man had conceived while out of his head, of obtaining possession of the property.

But the expression of the lawyer's face at this moment would have led any one to believe that he was guilty of something even more heinous than that.

But he appeared no longer to be frightened.

On the contrary, he seemed to have made up his mind to resist whatever the old farmer had in store for him.

Whether he suspected the detective's real identity or not the latter could not tell, but certain it was that he suspected the old farmer of knowing something about the murder that he (Bagley) would rather he had not known.

He glared at the detective as though he would have enjoyed making a meal off him, and finally said:

"Look here, old gentleman, what do you want here, anyway?"

"I told yer," replied Thad.

"But you did not tell me the truth, I am satisfied of that. Now, I want you to tell me what you are after."

"Wal, fu'st of all, I want ter tell yer thet Walter Glowers didn't kill the ole man, as I told yer, but merely imagined he did while under the influence of his comin' fit, an' he was laborin' under this same spell when he come ter you ter hev yer make up a forged will."

"See here, old man," interpolated Bagley, "that is the second time you have spoken about a forged will. What makes you think that we have forged a will?"

"I don't think so; I know it."

The lawyer was perplexed.

He determined to face it out, however.

"You know nothing of the kind, sir," he snapped. "It is impossible that you should know what is not true. I tell you there is no forged will to that Marlowe estate."

"An' I tell yer there is."

"How do you know?"

"I heard you say so."

"I heard me say so? Why, you old fool, I never saw you before."

"Mebbe not, but I seen you all the same."

"Where?"

"In the Marlowe mansion."

Thad had made a mistake.

In his excitement he had forgotten to use the dialect in this one sentence, and the keenly observant lawyer noticed it.

He stared at the detective in surprise.

"You saw me there?" he almost gasped.

"Yes, you and your partner—the day you searched for the genuine will, which you did not find."

This was a greater surprise than ever for the lawyer.

"Who are you?" he demanded, springing to his feet.

"That don't make no difference," drawled the detective, dropping back into the dialect.

"It does make a difference!" roared the lawyer, springing back and drawing a revolver.

But Thad was too quick for him.

The latter saw his motive, and before he had his pistol raised to a level the detective had covered him with his own revolver.

"Jest put that thar pop-gun up, please," he drawled, "er I might accidentally let this here machine go off and hurt yer. Now, jest hand over them papers, the forged will an' the papers tellin' who Walter and Wallace is."

The lawyer hesitated, but seeing that the detective was in dead earnest, he finally walked over to a safe and opening it, was about to take some papers therefrom, when some one entered the room, or rather two persons.

Thad took his eyes off the lawyer long enough to take a hasty glance in the direction.

It was McCoy and Tiger!

The new-comers took in the situation at a glance, and before Thad had time to do anything they had him covered with their revolvers.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AGAINST GREAT ODDS.

THE detective was dazed for an instant at the sudden and unexpected turn things had taken.

What puzzled him most was how Tiger had managed to escape from prison.

However, as he had done so, and was here in company with one of the lawyers, it was quite evident to Thad that the rascal owed his liberty to these fellows, and that they were as bad as he.

This all flashed through his brain in an instant.

He had no time for further thought, for the Tiger no sooner took in the situation when his old craving for blood came back to him too strong to be resisted.

And without a word of warning the villain raised his pistol and fired directly at the detective's head.

Fortunately his aim was not quite good enough.

The ball whizzed past Thad's ear, rather close for comfort, but not close enough for injury.

This gave the detective an excuse, if he had wanted one, to use his own weapon.

And he was not slow about doing it.

Before any one had time to think what he was up to, or the villain to re-cock, Thad blazed away.

And to better effect than the ruffian.

For a second later the latter uttered a wild shriek of pain, leaped into the air and fell at full length upon the floor.

This had the effect of striking the others with panic, temporarily, and McCoy was about to retreat into the hall from which he had just emerged.

But Thad did not intend that he should escape.

So, rushing upon him, the detective placed his pistol against his face and commanded him to surrender.

The lawyer, who was by this time thoroughly frightened, was about to obey, when suddenly, and from some unaccountable reason, he appeared to regain his courage.

For he stepped back and leveled his pistol at the detective.

Thad saw what he might expect if he did not act at once, and prepared to give the villainous lawyer the same dose he had given Tiger, but at the very instant that he pulled the trigger of his self-cocker, somebody from behind struck up his hand, and the charge was expended harmlessly in the ceiling.

The next instant, and before the detective had time to recover himself, the same party from behind clutched him firmly by the throat and drew his head back in such a way as to render him well-nigh helpless.

With Thad's gigantic strength, however, this would have been of short duration, had he been left alone.

Indeed, he was almost free already, when McCoy came to his partner's assistance.

Bagley (for it was he that had clutched him from behind) still retained a firm hold upon the detective's neck, rendering him to some extent helpless, and McCoy rushed up in front and dealt him a murderous blow in the forehead with his revolver.

This stunned the detective momentarily, and placed him virtually in the villains' power.

Without a word, they pushed him inside the door again and closed it.

The short time that elapsed from the moment that he received the blow upon the head until they pushed him inside the room was very brief, but it was sufficient for him to recover a good deal of his strength, and as Bagley had now relaxed his clutch upon the detective's neck, the latter felt himself equal to both men.

He did not betray his intention, however, realizing that a certain amount of stratagem was necessary.

But he did not allow them to regain their advantage over him, when he suddenly, and entirely unexpectedly to them, shot out his right fist with such force as to lay Bagley prostrate and unconscious at his feet.

This movement he expected would unnerve the other one so that his (the detective's) further task would be simple.

But to his astonishment, and consternation the lawyer did not lose his self-possession this time.

On the contrary, he appeared to be stimulated by the detective's action to his utmost efforts.

Springing away from Thad, McCoy leveled his pistol at him and fired, this time with better effect than Tiger had done.

The ball struck the detective on the head, so that he instantly became unconscious and reeled to the floor.

How long he remained thus, he knew not.

When he finally recovered consciousness, Thad found himself in a small apartment, the nature of which he could not for a time make out, as it was pitch dark.

A dull, heavy pain in his head, and a sense of weakness from loss of blood, recalled what had happened to him. Placing his hand to his head, he was relieved to find that though the bullet had broken the scalp, it had glanced from the skull without penetrating it. The injury indeed, proved to be slight, and, greatly relieved, the detective knew that he would soon be his old self again.

as his enemies would learn to their sorrow, he thought.

He staggered to his feet with some difficulty, and began to grope about to ascertain where he was.

Two or three steps sufficed to bring him slap up against a wall, and he felt along this for a little distance, only to find that the wall came to an angle. Along the second wall he felt his way for a short distance, when he came to another angle.

This proved to him that the room into which he had been thrust was little, if any more than a mere closet.

A little further investigation proved this to be the case.

Still feeling his way along, he finally found a door; but when he came to try it, he was discomfited to find it fastened on the other side.

And what was worse, there was no sign of a knob or handle on the inside.

He felt, however, that he could burst the door open; but this would be dangerous business in case there was anybody on the other side.

The detective listened.

All was quiet.

So quiet, indeed, that he could distinctly hear his own heart beat.

Evidently there was nobody in the room on the other side of the door.

Or if there was, they were extremely quiet.

He therefore determined to make a break for liberty.

Drawing himself away from the door as far as the limits of the closet would permit, the detective threw himself against the door with all the force he could summon.

To his delight, the door cracked, although it did not burst open, and gave him hope of ultimately breaking it down.

The noise produced was enough to have aroused anybody who might have been about.

Thad thought of this and listened.

No sign of life could be heard.

He therefore summoned courage to make another lunge against the door.

This time he felt it give perceptibly, although it still did not yield.

And he backed away for another effort.

This time desperation lent him additional strength, and as he came against the stubborn door, the lock gave way and the door flew open.

The detective found himself in darkness still, and he could not make out where he was.

He felt in his pockets for a match, and was fortunate enough to find one.

Striking the match and holding it above his head, he saw that he was in a small room opening off a larger one.

Making his way into the second apartment while the match burned, he hunted about for the gas.

When the gas threw its glare about the apartment, the detective looked around him.

He found himself in the identical office in which he had encountered the two lawyers and nearly lost his life.

A crimson spot on the floor marked the place where the ruffian had fallen, but that individual had been removed.

Thad then turned to the safe where Bagley had gone for the papers, but as he might have expected, it was locked securely, and he saw that it would only be a waste of time to attempt to open it.

He had but one object now, and that was to get out of the place as soon as possible and reach some physician where he could have his wound dressed.

Before turning out the gas, therefore, he tried the door, and to his consternation, found it locked.

This door, he knew, was too heavy and strong to be broken down by ordinary means, and he did not attempt it.

He next tried the windows, and found them also locked.

And he realized that even if they had been unlocked, he could not have reached the ground from them.

But just here a happy thought occurred to him.

The fire-escape, if there should be any.

Making his way to the rear of the building, he was delighted to find that there was a fire-escape, and what was better yet, the

windows were not fastened. Indeed, they were not even closed.

This set the detective to thinking.

Had the windows been left open intentionally for the sake of ventilation, or had some one made his escape in that direction? The latter looked the most reasonable, from the fact that the windows would have been lowered from the top for ventilation, instead of being raised from the bottom.

Returning to the front room, the detective rolled up a piece of paper and lighted it in the gas-flame, after which he proceeded into the back room again and instituted a search.

The first thing that attracted his attention was a series of blood-stains on the floor.

Tracing these along they led him to one of the windows, and raising the latter and putting his light outside, he saw that the blood-stains continued on to the balcony of the fire-escape.

There was but one way of accounting for this, and that was that Tiger had been taken out that way, most likely to prevent the police from seeing him and thereby bringing about an investigation, which would not have been pleasant for the two lawyers.

However, whatever had been done with him, or the lawyers' motive for taking the ruffian out that way, did not interest Thad just then.

Putting out the lights, he proceeded to descend the fire-escape as rapidly as his weak condition would permit.

As the parties who had descended before had left the ladder down, he had no trouble in reaching the ground in safety.

But having got down from the fire-escape safely, his troubles were by no means at an end.

There was a high wall around the little court at the rear of the building, and in order to get out he was compelled to climb this obstruction by a short ladder which the parties going before him had left against it. But no sooner had he raised his head above the wall when he was seized by the throat by somebody on the outside.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PLEASANT DISCOVERY.

THAD had got too near to the portal of liberty to be balked now, but he knew that he was at a disadvantage fighting at the top of a ladder.

So he wrenched himself free with a desperate effort and sprang back into the yard again.

As he did so his foot struck against a package of papers.

Ordinarily he would have paid no attention to the circumstance, as it would not be strange to find bundles of papers in such a place; but on this occasion something impelled him to stoop and pick up the parcel, when, to his surprise, he found it to be a very large manila envelope, such as are used for legal papers, and was so securely fastened with tape that the detective was constrained to believe the contents were of no ordinary character.

Indeed, improbable as it was, he could not help thinking they were the documents he was looking for.

It was too dark to examine them in this place, besides his main desire now was to make his escape, so he placed the package in his pocket, and looked about him for another means of exit besides the ladder.

As he walked along the wall feeling for a possible door, he finally got around to the side where the ladder was again.

As he did so, he heard voices outside, and paused to listen.

Thad had not heard three words before he was satisfied that he recognized the voices, but he was not certain, and still listened.

Again he was impressed with the fact that he recognized the voices notwithstanding he could scarcely hear them.

But as he listened the speakers appeared to forget their caution, and began to speak in a loud tone of voice.

Could he believe his ears?

Yes, there could be no doubt of it.

It was Wallace Marlowe and Walter Glow-ers!

"What could they be doing here?"

Had it been they that caught the detective by the throat a moment ago?

These questions flashed through his brain in rapid succession, and he did not pause for

much more reflection before he went to the side of the wall, and placing his mouth to a crack, called out:

"Is that you, Walter and Wallace?"

The talking on the outside instantly ceased, but the young men had evidently not recognized the detective's voice, for they did not respond to his inquiry until he had repeated it.

Then they both started and spoke at once.

"Why, it's the detective!" they exclaimed, together.

As soon as Thad found that they knew him, he lost no time in mounting the ladder again.

It was too dark for the young men to see him, or they might still have been in doubt as to his identity.

"Well, what in the name of wonder are you doing here, my young friends?" inquired the detective, as he prepared to climb over the wall.

"That is exactly what we were going to ask you," rejoined Walter, laughing. "What in the name of all that's curious are you doing here, Mr. Burr?"

"I guess," observed Thad, as he descended to the ground on the outside of the wall, "we had better wait till we reach some place of more privacy before we discuss anything."

The young men agreed that he was right, and he proposed that they should repair to his apartments on Thirteenth street at once; but the young men hesitated.

"No, we cannot leave here," remarked Wallace.

"Why not?" demanded the detective.

"I'll tell you," whispered Walter. "I had a vague recollection of having brought these swindling lawyers some important papers while I was under the influence of my malady, and brother and I decided to come and get them. We went into the office about six o'clock last night, and demanded the documents, and were refused. We then went to a judge who is a friend of mine, and procured a warrant for their arrest. When we came back with two officers they refused to open the door, and instead of breaking the door in, the officers came back here, knowing that sooner or later they would try to make their escape, while we remained in front to give the alarm in case they tried to escape in that direction. Well, it seems, they were not down here long before the policemen saw the two lawyers coming down the fire-escape carrying a body. When they reached the wall here, they stopped and discussed their plans, and it was decided between them that one of them should remain here with the wounded man, as the body proved to be, while the other went back after some papers."

"One of them then went up the fire-escape again, and the other remained here. The moment the one went up the ladder the officers arrested the one that remained, and took him, with the wounded man, who proved to be our old friend Tiger, and we are waiting here to see that the other man does not come down, and escape before the officers come back."

"In my opinion, then, my boys," interpolated Thad, "he will never come down, or rather, he has already come down, and made his escape in another direction."

"Horrible!" declared Walter in a doleful voice. "And taken the papers with him, I suppose."

"No, as to the papers," interposed the detective, "if I am not mistaken, I have them here."

With that he drew out the package he had found in the back yard, and handed it to Walter, who walked to the corner of the street where there was a light to examine it. He soon returned with the information that they were the papers he was in search of.

"Well, we will remain here a little while, and see whether the other party comes down or not; but we must keep quieter than you fellows did if we do not wish him to hear us and run away."

The three men then shrunk up close to the wall, so that they were completely obscured in shadow, and relapsed into silence.

They remained thus for some ten or fifteen minutes, and then they heard some one in the back yard.

For several minutes they could hear him walking about as though searching for some-

thing, and occasionally emitting an expression of disappointment in an undertone.

Finally he appeared to despair of finding whatever it was that he was looking for, and, after listening for some time and apparently becoming satisfied that no one was about, struck a match and held it up and looked about him.

As the glow of the match lighted up his face the detective, peeping through the wall, saw that it was Bagley.

Stealthily and noiselessly mounting the ladder leading over the wall, Thad suddenly threw himself fully upon the rascal and bore him to the earth.

His struggles were of brief duration, as he was no match for the powerful detective, and the next moment the latter had a pair of handcuffs on the fellow.

A few minutes later the officers returned and took him in charge, and Thad and his two young friends took their departure.

As soon as they got out where it was light, the two young men stared at the detective.

"Well, I'll swear!" ejaculated Wallace, who was the first to recover his voice. "If I had seen you before you made yourself known to us, I should have been inclined to break something over your head or run away from you, I don't know which."

"I'll wager a supper that your mother wouldn't know you," declared Walter, laughing. "I never saw such a make-up in my life."

And so curious were the young men about his method of disguising himself, that they insisted upon going to his rooms and witnessing the way he did it.

On the way, they visited a surgeon, who bathed and dressed Thad's wound, dismissing him with the encouraging dictum that it was not at all serious.

Arrived at his studio, he took his young friends into his make-up room, although it was then nearly midnight, and explained his methods of making himself appear in any guise he chose from a dapper young man to an octogenarian or an old woman.

When they had been satisfied upon this matter, and Thad had restored his face and form to their natural state, the young men insisted upon his going with them to supper.

They went to Delmonico's, where they had a splendid lay-out, and sat discussing it and talking until a late hour, and then, at their further solicitation, the detective accompanied them to their mother's house for the purpose of inspecting the papers which they had just recovered from the rascally lawyers.

In spite of all his loss of sleep, the detective did not feel in the least fatigued as long as there was something interesting in store for him, and after the three men were comfortably seated in easy-chairs with a bottle of good Burgundy and a box of the finest imported cigars in front of them, they proceeded to examine the papers.

They consisted in part of the forged will got up by the lawyers, McCoy & Bagley, which were immediately destroyed, and partly of the private papers of the deceased commodore, including a statement regarding the paternity, etc., of the two boys, corroborative of the Beech woman's story.

This was freshly written, compared with the other papers, and had evidently been written and placed among the other documents very recently—most likely just previous to the old gentleman's demise.

This had undoubtedly been done at the instance of the Beech woman, who, it appeared, did not wish him to die without setting all parties right before the world.

"There was a shade of honesty about this woman after all," observed the detective, "bad as she was. Poor creature! What a burden she had to carry through life with her."

"Yes," rejoined Walter, "and all because she could not induce another woman's husband to fall in love with her. Women are queer creatures, always falling in love with the very fellow that wouldn't pull them out of the mud when a half-dozen other fellows are dying to have them."

"I hope you are not speaking from experience," laughed Wallace.

"To a certain extent I am," replied the other. "I love a girl who won't look at me, and at the same time I know a dozen that would marry me quicker than scat."

They continued to pore over the papers,

and so unconsciously did time pass that before the three men thought of it, a servant came up and announced breakfast.

"It's nine o'clock, as I am a sinner!" exclaimed the detective, consulting his watch. "Who could have imagined that we had been here all this time? At all events, we can congratulate ourselves that we are through, and the mystery is pretty well cleared up."

"All but the ghost," suggested Walter.

"Yes, all but the ghost," repeated the detective, "and I will know something about that before another sun, mind my words."

"I hope and pray you may," rejoined Wallace. "It will be the greatest blessing that ever came to this family, when that horrible mystery is cleared up."

"Don't despair, brother," said Walter. "Leave the matter to Mr. Burr, and ten to one he will unravel it very soon. But come, let us go down to breakfast. I am as hungry as a wolf."

The others being in a similar state, it did not require any more urging, and they all descended to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNEXPECTED ADVENTURE.

THE folks all had a great deal to talk about at breakfast, and the consequence was that it was nearly noon when the detective finally took leave of the family.

As soon as he left the house he made his way at once to his room on Thirteenth street.

His idea was to make some alterations in his disguise—or rather make himself up, as he was then in his natural character—preparatory to going to the so-called haunted house in search of the ghost.

He at once proceeded to make himself up, as soon as he reached his studio, to represent a fashionable young man of the world, believing that the most appropriate disguise for the occasion.

But when he completed his task, which he did in the course of half an hour, it occurred to the detective that there was no use of going to the old mansion so early, as the apparition was not in the habit of making its appearance until about three or four in the afternoon.

At the same time he realized that he was greatly fatigued from his recent arduous work and loss of sleep.

He therefore decided to lie down and take a short nap previous to setting out.

This he felt he could do without danger of oversleeping himself, as long habit had accustomed him to time himself in his sleep with such precision that he could generally awake to the minute.

Thus he threw himself down upon his lounge with the promise that he would awake not later than half-past two or three o'clock.

But whether it was from the fact that he was more fatigued than he had imagined, or the relaxation from the mental strain under which he had been so long subjected, now that his work with one exception was completed, he did for once in his life oversleep himself.

Indeed, he slept on and on, and there is no telling how long he would have slept, had not something occurred to arouse him.

The first thing he realized after becoming conscious was the sound of a heavy crash somewhere not far from him.

Thad sprang up with a start and found, to his astonishment, that it was pitch dark in the room.

He also realized that there was some one there, although he could see nothing.

He had fortunately made no noise in awakening, and he could hear stealthy, foot-steps approaching him.

For a single instant he was bewildered as to what to do.

He was also bewildered to know how the intruder had effected an entrance.

But he then remembered that the door leading from the dumb-waiter, which he sometimes used as an elevator, was only a thin, frail structure which might easily be smashed in, and that was what he had evidently heard.

And that led him to believe that the intruder had entered with the impression that there was nobody in at the moment, and that his object was robbery.

And yet if this were the case, why was the person moving about with such caution?

All these reflections flashed through his mind in a few seconds' space, and while the mysterious personage was making a half-dozen strides in the direction of the detective.

And at the end of the reverie Thad, realizing that the fellow was coming directly toward him, resolved upon at least one move, which was to step to one side.

And the action was none too quick.

For he had no more than taken it when a blinding flash quickly followed by a deafening report demonstrated two facts. One, that he had been standing in front of the window, which allowed him to be seen by the other person; and second, that the person had taken advantage of the fact and attempted to shoot him.

Determined not to give his adversary an opportunity for another shot, Thad made a vigorous spring in the dark in the direction from which the flash had emanated.

But to his utter astonishment there was nothing there.

At least not in the spot where he landed.

The person must have seen his action and, like himself, dodged to one side.

The detective realized his peril in the event of this being true, and lost no time in making a search for his would-be assassin.

First he sprung in one direction and then in another, but to his surprise and chagrin, he was disappointed on both occasions.

There was nothing there.

He did not know what to make of it.

How could the person have made his escape so suddenly?

Still realizing that he was in deadly peril—as his antagonist might still have him between him and the window—the detective suddenly dropped to the floor.

Here he would at least be safe from the fellow's bullets, and it would give him an opportunity to collect his thoughts and listen for the intruder's approach or retreat.

For several minutes the detective crouched upon the floor intently listening, but not a sound could be heard.

What could it all mean? he asked himself over and over again.

There appeared to be but one solution to the mystery, and that was that the would-be assassin, after firing, had quickly concealed himself somewhere in the darkness and was awaiting an opportunity to make another assault.

This reflection was not cheering.

Fear, in the ordinary sense, was not common to him, but there are times when the bravest heart must quail, and this was one of them.

Unarmed, in the presence of an unseen foe, caused even the fearless detective to experience something akin to dread.

And then a strange notion suggested itself to him.

Could it be possible that the mysterious apparition of Ghost Hall had anything to do with this?

But he gave the thought only a second's reflection and dismissed it as too absurd to be entertained.

Meantime he kept his ears open for any sound, but still not an echo broke the dead quiet.

At length he made up his mind to put an end to the suspense, even at the risk of his life, for he felt that he could endure it no longer.

At the same time, determined to avoid rashness, he did not rise to his feet, but crept quietly on all-fours to the rear of the apartment (which was his front room) and, finding the door, crept through.

When once out of the room in which the attack upon his life had been made, strangely enough the detective felt less apprehension, although he might have considered that his assailant was as likely—nay, more likely to be in here than in the front, for it would have been the most natural thing in the world for him to have sought refuge here.

Nevertheless, Thad felt more at his ease now, and rose to his feet.

The next move was to procure his dark lantern and light it, which he succeeded in doing without attracting his assailant, and then moved cautiously and noiselessly to the door again.

Arrived here, he suddenly flashed the light first in one direction and then in another, although he realized that in doing so

he was making a conspicuous target of himself, and finally moved the light all around the room in order to bring out in turn every nook and corner; but he was again doomed to disappointment.

No sign of a living being was to be seen.

There was the unmistakable evidence of his assailant having been there, however, for there was a great irregularly shaped hole through one of the panes of glass in the front window where the charge from his assailant's pistol had passed through.

This convinced him that the person had been no ghost—even if he had ever seriously entertained such a supposition, and also that he would be assassin was still lurking in the neighborhood somewhere.

His fear, such as it had been, had entirely vanished now, and he at once set about searching for the mysterious assailant with all the energy and persistence he possessed.

First devoting himself to the front room, he examined every place where it was possible for a human being to conceal himself, but with the same result that had rewarded his first search.

He was almost discouraged, for he did not deem it possible that the person could be in the other room, otherwise he would have attacked the detective when he struck the light.

However, having failed to discover any trace of any one in this apartment, there was nothing to do but go to the other.

And, returning to the back room, and from that to the two bedrooms leading off them, he diligently searched them all.

But still no one could be found.

The detective was at the end of his tether.

Where could the mysterious person have gone?

But just then he thought of the dumb-waiter, and going to it and flashing his light inside, he saw that the lift was down.

That appeared to solve the mystery.

The intruder, whoever it was, evidently made his way to the elevator as soon as he fired the shot, and while the detective was too much agitated to notice his retreat, jumped upon it and descended.

Thad was angry with himself for not having thought of this sooner, as the delay had given the fugitive ample time to escape.

However, he lost no time now in making his way down-stairs, and a moment later was upon the street.

The street was dark, as it always is at this point, the gloom only being slightly tempered rather than dispelled by the distant lamps, and was more than ordinarily quiet.

The detective looked up and down the street, and at first could see no one moving, but a little later caught a glimpse of some one in the distance—a block away.

Without any real hope that it was the person who had attacked him, Thad instinctively started in pursuit of the pedestrian.

Walking at a rapid pace, he succeeded in the course of a few blocks in gaining sufficiently on the person to perceive that it was a man, and, whether it was real or imaginary, there was something in the fellow's actions that aroused the detective's suspicions that he was the man he was after.

Fortunately the fugitive had not noticed that he was being followed, or, if he did, he showed no indications of it.

And to prevent the possibility of his doing so, Thad slipped over to the opposite side of the street.

He had no more than done so when the man he was shadowing quickened his pace, which had been rather leisurely before, and began to walk so rapidly that Thad was put to it to keep him in sight.

The fugitive appeared to be making for Broadway, but when he reached Sixth avenue he turned up that street, continued in that direction for a block and then turned west again.

Thad still followed, keeping on the opposite side of the street, and, as he thought, succeeded in keeping the fugitive in ignorance of the fact that he was being shadowed.

On and on continued the fugitive, and the detective was beginning to think it was a wild goose chase he was on, when he noticed the fellow had taken one of the diagonally-running streets which converge to Greenwich Village, and he followed more eagerly than ever, wondering more than ever who the fellow could be.

He was satisfied that it was none of the

Marlowe family, for if it had been, he would not have comported himself in that way. But just here it occurred to him that there was no reason for thinking the fugitive was directing his course toward Ghost Hall, simply because he was going to Greenwich Village.

However, when he had pursued his course for another block or two and the person in advance of him arrived on the corner nearest the old house, the detective was more than ever astonished to see him cut across and make toward it.

He was convinced now that it was some one in some way connected with the family.

And then the same thought occurred to him which had flashed upon him while searching for his assailant, and for one brief moment he could not avoid associating this mysterious personage with the ghost!

But he as quickly dismissed it as foolish, and tried to account for him from a practical standpoint.

By this time the man had reached the front of the house and opening the front gate, coolly walked in.

A moment later Thad saw him put a key into the front door, open it and enter.

As soon as he was inside the detective hastened to the rear of the house, descended to the basement, entered the secret passage and soon mounted to the second floor.

Making his way along the passage he had soon arrived in the niche in the wall of the library where he had seen the ghost and from which he had overheard the conversation between Herme Glowers and Walter Marlowe.

Pausing to listen for an instant, he heard footsteps in the room below him which told him that the fellow had arrived and was in the library.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MOTHER'S REVENGE.

REALIZING the disadvantage at which he would place himself by opening the panel, the detective concluded not to do it, but instead to return along the passage to the bedroom where it had no outlet, and coming out at that point, make his way round to the hall-door of the room.

Acting upon this idea, the detective was not long in reaching the door in question, but before entering he prepared himself for an emergency by drawing his pistol.

Having done this, he turned the knob of the door so softly as to make no noise whatever, and peeped in.

The person inside had lighted a candle that stood in one of the old-fashioned candlesticks on the mantel, which threw a dim light about the immediate vicinity, but left the greater part of the room in gloom.

The man stood with his back to the detective, showing that he had no suspicion that he had been followed, and Thad had no trouble in slipping into the room without being observed.

He was no more than inside when the man turned his face so that the light fell upon it, and to the detective's astonishment, he saw that it was Herman Glowers, Herme's brother!

Feeling satisfied that it was he who had attempted to take his life in his (the detective's) own apartments, the latter moved upon him at once.

So quickly and silently did the detective advance upon the fellow, that he was within a yard of the latter before the man had the least suspicion that he was near.

The fellow started violently when he turned and saw that Thad had him covered with his revolver, and grew as white as a ghost.

For an instant neither man spoke, but eyed each other sharply, and then Herman, who was the first to break the silence, said, in a tremulous voice that showed that he was badly frightened:

"What do you want?"

"I want you!" ejaculated the detective, firmly.

"Wh—what for?" demanded the other, in a quavering tone.

"I do not know that it is worth while for me to explain a thing which you know as well as I do. Still, if you insist upon it, I will tell you. It is for attempting to kill me awhile ago."

Thad had chanced all this, for, as a matter of fact, he had very little reason to believe

that this man was the same that had been in his rooms an hour before.

But if he had any doubt upon this point, the fellow's countenance told him that he had struck the right trail.

Herman blanched more than ever at this accusation, and began to tremble so violently that he was unable to speak for a minute or two.

"And now, as I have told you why I want you," pursued the detective, "perhaps you will be good enough, sir, to inform me why you desired to take my life."

It was still a long time before the fellow could speak, but he ultimately made out to falter:

"Try to take your life, sir? Why, I never saw you before in my life."

Thad was on the point of telling him that he was telling a falsehood, when he suddenly remembered the disguise he wore, and knew that the fellow was virtually telling the truth.

He therefore determined to put an end to further parley by telling him who he was.

"You imagine you have never seen me before, Herman Glowers," he observed, "but you have—often. My name is Thaddeus Burr, the detective, and you cannot deny having tried to kill me in my apartments on Thirteenth street a little while ago!"

The fellow started again, and there was a wildness in his eyes that led Thad to believe he had run across another maniac.

And then all of a sudden to the detective's astonishment, the fellow broke down and began to weep like a child.

When he finally raised his face, which he had kept buried in a handkerchief for a long time, the man stammered:

"Yes, yes, I did try to kill you, and I thought I had done so—I was sure that I had done so. But—"

Here he paused and gave way to his feelings again.

"Why did you want to kill me?" demanded the detective. "What had I ever done to deserve death at your hands?"

"Everything," faltered the fellow. "But—but—first of all, let me tell you who I am."

"What!" exclaimed Thad, opening his eyes very wide. "Are you not Herman Glowers?"

And then it occurred to him that this fellow used very good English, whereas he remembered that Herman Glowers's grammar was extremely poor.

But just as he began to puzzle over the problem of who the fellow could possibly be, the latter came to his relief.

"You imagined, I see," he began, in a calmer voice, "that I was my brother. The fact is, sir, I am Herman Glowers, and I put on this male apparel for disguise. And now I will tell you why I desired to kill you.

A week ago I was the happy possessor of a son. Alone in the world as I am, he was a great comfort to me—in fact, my only comfort. He would have remained my son forever, or at least until my death or his, if it had not been for you."

"But, my dear woman," interposed Thad, as soon as he recovered sufficiently from his astonishment at the discovery to speak, "I could in no way avert what fate had in store for you. The facts were there and would always have remained there if I had never existed. It was no fault of mine that I accidentally discovered the truth. Besides—"

"That is exactly what I hated you for," she interrupted. "If you had not discovered the truth I would to-day be the happy mother—or believe I was, which is the same thing—that I have been all these years, instead of the lonely, forlorn creature that I am."

"At the same time, you cannot deny that while you were rejoicing in the possession of a son, another mother's heart was aching for the loss of one."

"There you are wrong," insisted the woman. "I am willing to admit that what you have done is only common justice. That everybody has got his or her rights, but that is a small matter when weighed against a mother's feelings. As far as Mrs. Marlowe was concerned, the loss was nothing to her, believing as she did that her son died in infancy, while with me, he has just died in manhood. Let me put it to yourself, as I take it you are a married man. Supposing that you had brought up a son or daughter

believing all the time that it was your own, do you not think that you would miss its loss as greatly as though it had really been your own, if, on coming to manhood or womanhood it was suddenly taken away, either by death or otherwise, although at the same time you had discovered that it was not your own offspring?"

This was coming too close to home not to have its effect upon the detective's susceptible heart.

She had touched him in a tender spot.

"Yes," he was finally compelled to admit, "I do not know but what you are right, my poor woman, and I feel for you sincerely."

"And do you imagine," she continued, "that the real mother can have the same affection for him that I, who reared him, can?"

"It hardly stands to reason—at least for a time. Still, to come back to the original question, I do not see that this gives you an excuse for desiring to kill me."

"You do not?"

"Certainly not."

"That is because you cannot feel as a mother feels. My first impulse was to kill the mother," she went on; "but upon reflection, I concluded that she was in no way responsible, and the only one whom I could fix the responsibility upon was yourself, and I determined to kill you. This, I realized, would result in my own death, and I would then be at rest. I was rash, no doubt, and if it were to do over again, I do not think I would act as I did. However, the thing is so far done, and cannot be undone, so as soon as you are ready to take me to prison, I am ready to go."

Thad was silent for some moments, plunged in deep reflection.

Finally he looked up and said:

"Suppose I shouldn't take you to prison, do you think it likely that you would make another attempt upon my life?"

"No, sir, I am quite sure I should not," she replied earnestly. "If I ever try anything rash again, it will be upon my own sad, worthless life."

"I trust you will not do that," said Thad, in a sympathetic voice. "I hope you won't do that, for I have decided to release you on your promise not to attempt either my life or your own. What do you say?"

She was thoughtful for some moments, and finally burst into tears again, at the same time extending her hand.

"How can I refuse any promise in the face of such magnanimity?" he sobbed.

Thad grasped the proffered hand and pressed it warmly.

"I believe I can trust you," he observed, kindly. "You may go as soon as you like."

"Oh, thank you, sir! You shall never regret this kindness!" she cried feelingly.

"Do not mention it, my good woman. But I must go. Good-by."

And wringing her hand again, the detective departed, leaving this strange creature alone in the room.

He did not quit the house at once, however, but re-entering the secret passage, returned to the niche and proceeded to watch her movements.

He had his trouble for nothing, however, for the detective had no sooner left the room when the woman quickly resumed her female apparel and quit the apartment, and soon afterward the house.

So rapidly had she worked that when Thad put his eye to the hole which he had made in the panel, she was on the point of extinguishing the light, after which, of course, he could see nothing more, and also left the place.

But he watched for her outside, and as soon as she appeared, he proceeded to shadow her.

Again he found that he had had his trouble for nothing, for the poor, forlorn woman only went a short distance before she called a cab, and had herself driven directly to the house of Mrs. Marlowe on Sixty-third street.

Of course Thad followed her in another cab, and when he saw her enter the house, was about to turn away and drive back to his apartments, it being too late to go ghost-hunting, as he thought, but just as the cab wheeled about, he saw Wallace and Walter Marlowe coming along.

The detective hailed them and they stopped,

but of course did not recognize him in his present disguise.

He soon made himself known to them, however, when Walter, grasping his hand, said:

"I have seen two-faced men, but you are the original man with a hundred faces. By the way, what are you doing up here at this time of night?"

It was the first time since Thad had lain down upon his lounge that he had given a thought to the time, and he now consulted his watch and saw that it was after midnight.

"I had no idea it was so late, boys," observed the detective. "The fact is, I have been on another chase."

"Nothing connected with our case, I suppose?" interposed Wallace, laughing.

"Yes, as a matter of fact it is," he rejoined. "But I don't know that I ought to say anything about it."

They pleaded so earnestly, however, that he was finally compelled to relate the details of his adventure with the woman.

"Poor dear old mamma," said Walter, feelingly. "I knew she loved me, but I had no idea that her affection was strong enough to cause her to want to commit murder for me. By Jove! I must let her understand that I appreciate her regard for me, for I never have treated her half like a son."

"And above all, my son," suggested Thad, "I should advise my mother if I were you, not to make too much over you in her presence. Neither would I be too demonstrative in my tenderness toward my mother. The poor old creature is extremely sore-hearted, and there is no telling what it may lead to. But I must go, boys."

"By no means," declared both young men in one voice. "You will come in and spend the night with us," continued Walter firmly.

"Impossible," protested Thad. "I haven't been to supper yet, and—"

"Neither have we," chimed in the young men. "But we soon will have some, and we propose that you shall join us."

And in spite of his protests they literally dragged him from the cab and almost forced him into the house.

The young men had been to the theater, and as was their custom on returning home, they had a splendid collation spread awaiting them, and the three friends sat down to it with a good will, especially Thad who had eaten nothing since his late breakfast.

They supped and talked late into the night, and finally retired.

It was late when they arose next morning and nearly noon when the detective bade them farewell and started once more upon his spirit chase.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED AT LAST.

WHEN the detective bade farewell to his two young friends and left them at their mother's residence, it was his intention to go directly to the house in Greenwich Village, and, if possible, solve the mystery of the ghost.

But as it was only a little after noon, it occurred to him that it was too early for the ghost to appear.

He therefore went into a restaurant to get some lunch and kill time at once.

For a time after ordering his meal he perused a newspaper while waiting for it to be brought on, but his mind was too full of the exciting events of the past few days to allow him to become interested in anything else.

And so his eyes gradually wandered away from his paper, first to the ceiling, the figures on the wall, and finally to the moving panorama of faces that came and went.

At length a lady came in and sat down at a table opposite him, and his eyes wandered, mechanically to her face.

But he had no more than caught sight of it when he became interested.

The reason was that he had seen it somewhere before, but where he could not for the life of him recall.

The woman was young and remarkably beautiful, and was well dressed, but somehow the detective could not help but associate her with something of a childish nature.

It seemed to him that the street dress and hat she wore were entirely out of place.

He tried to remember an actress whom she resembled, but failed, and finally concluded that he had seen a child with that face, and possibly this was an older relative of the same child, or what was quite as probable, possibly it was some one whom he had known as a child, grown to womanhood.

With this he tried to dismiss the subject from his mind, but he found this as much of an impossibility as he had found the task of identifying the little lady.

And in spite of himself, he found his eyes continually wandering to her face, until she noticed his seeming impertinence, became embarrassed and changed her seat so that she sat with her back to him.

This annoyed him more than ever, for, in addition to being considered impudent, he could not help feeling annoyed at the idea of continually associating the face, although he could no longer see it, with babyhood.

To such an extent did this thing work upon the detective's mind, that he did not half enjoy his lunch, and was glad when he saw the pretty lady rise to go.

But for some reason or other, he found himself also preparing to leave the place, and by the time the lady had reached the street the detective was not ten feet behind her.

Thad was determined to pay no more attention to the woman, but in spite of his resolution, he found himself five minutes later dogging her steps as though she had been a suspect of the darkest dye.

The lady paid no attention to the detective, so he had no difficulty in shadowing her without attracting her attention.

On, on she went, and the further Thad followed her the more interested he became, and the more his mind struggled with the problem of identification.

So busy were his thoughts, and so deeply absorbed was the detective in the subject of where he had seen the lady, that he did not take notice where she was leading him until he suddenly came to a place which had grown very familiar to him of late.

In other words, she had arrived in front of No. 13 Fourth street, Greenwich Village, known in the neighborhood as "Ghost Hall."

Then it all came to him.

This was the ghost.

At least that was his first impression, and when he saw her open the front gate and start toward the house, he was positive of it.

As the lady went round to the rear of the house, he knew that she intended to enter the tunnel and secret passage, and of course he could not use that route this time. So the detective, fortunately having the key which he had obtained for the purpose of admitting the coroner the previous day, opened the door and quietly stole up-stairs.

Here he concealed himself behind the *portiere*, as usual, and waited for results.

In about ten minutes he heard almost inaudible footsteps in the passage—so soft were they, in fact, that had he not been listening for them he would never have heard them.

As soon as he was sure that the girl was at the end of the passage, that is, in the niche, he quickly and noiselessly glided out of the room, through the hall and into the rear bedroom.

Here he threw open the door of the cabinet which formed the entrance to the secret passage, passed through into the passage, and after assuring himself that the girl was still at the other end, came out and carried the largest chair in the room into the passage and forced it as far as it would go down the stairway, completely blocking the way.

He then returned to the front room, and boldly walking up to the panel, threw it open.

There, as he expected, stood the girl, but this time she did not resemble a corpse, but rather a very beautiful woman in full health and vigor.

As soon as the door was thrown open and her eyes fell upon the detective, she was evidently greatly confused.

She blushed scarlet and turned deathly pale by turns, and then all of a sudden appeared to recover her presence of mind, and darted off at the top of her speed.

The moment she started to run Thad ran

back to the rear bedroom, and, having fastened the door on the inside, concealed himself beside the sham cabinet.

A moment later he heard the girl struggling with the chair in the stairway.

But finding, after a long struggle, that she could not remove the obstacle, she appeared to lose her presence of mind again, and after racing back and forth along the passage from the bedchamber to the front room and back again, she finally darted out into the bedchamber where the detective was secreted.

The moment she was outside of the sham cabinet Thad sprang from his place of concealment and closing the door, fastened it.

The next instant the girl turned, and seeing that she was trapped, gave vent to one of the horrible screams that had frightened so many people.

The detective took no notice of it, and in fact, did not move out of his tracks for some minutes, thus allowing her to become calm before addressing her.

At length, seeing that he did not attempt to molest her, the girl grew calm, and the detective addressed her:

"Don't be afraid of me, young lady," he began. "I am an old fellow and a father myself, and wouldn't harm you for the world."

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" she demanded rather sharply.

"I am a detective, and I am here to discover your motive for playing the ghost in this old house and frightening everybody, especially your own people, to death."

The girl gazed at him with a bewildered expression.

"I do not know what you mean," she said at length.

"Do you mean to say that you do not know that your actions here have frightened everybody out of the house?"

"Why, no," she replied, looking more bewildered than ever. "My actions? What do you mean, sir?"

"Well, what you have been doing just now, for instance, running back and forth through this secret passage, and occasionally screaming enough to raised the dead. Do you mean to tell me that, in short, you have not some motive in all this?"

To this she seemed to be utterly unable to reply, and stood staring at the detective with the innocent amazement of a child depicted in every lineament of her face.

"Thad began to see daylight at last!

Yesterday he had seen the demonstrations of her brother who was afflicted with cataleptic fits, and had seen the extent of folly and even crime to which he had gone while under the influence of the preliminary stages. He also knew that she was similarly afflicted, for he had seen her in one of her comatose states when he mistook her for a dead person.

Taking these facts into consideration, and coupling them with her evident innocence, he arrived at the conclusion that she had performed all her antics while under the influence of this dreadful disease, and was therefore not responsible.

Therefore he determined to humor her and get the facts from her.

"My dear young lady, will you tell me why you keep yourself aloof from your family, who so dearly love you?"

"My family does not love me; it hates me. My poor father loved me, but he is dead now, and nobody loves me."

This was uttered in such an earnest and yet such a pitiful voice, that Thad not only believed in her sincerity, but pitied her from the bottom of his heart.

"Where have you lived all this time—since you left home, I mean?" he asked.

"With a family I met out in Canada. They think I am an orphan and have adopted me as their own."

"Why do you come here, then?"

"I do not know. I often find myself here and wonder how I came, and then I get away as fast as I can for fear some of the family will see me."

"Do you not remember of coming here this afternoon, or of seeing me in the restaurant where you took lunch?"

"I remember seeing you in the restaurant, but I remember nothing that happened after that."

"Do you know anything about your father going West to bury you when you were supposed to have been drowned in the lake?"

"Yes, I fell into the lake and my friends thought I was drowned and telegraphed so to my father, who came on. I was rescued by these same people that I am living with, and as I gave them another name they never knew that I was the same person who was supposed to have been drowned. My father could not find me, and rather than tell my mother that I was still in 'Davy Jones's Locker,' as he would say, he told her that he had found the body and buried it."

"Now, my young lady, let me tell you something," said the detective, with mock severity. "In the first place, you are mistaken about your family *hating* you. Your poor father died because you went away, and your mother will soon die if you do not return."

"But, she thinks I am dead!"

"No, she does *not*. She *knows* you are living, and is grieving herself to death on account of your heartlessness in not returning."

"If I were sure that she would like to have me come, I should be glad to go to her—to go home!"

"I know she would be delighted, wild with joy at your return. Do you suppose that she would pay me thousands of dollars to hunt you up if she did not wish your return?"

"Has she done that?" she asked with wide eyes.

"Certainly she has—a large sum of money spent to recover you."

"Then I will go with you. Does she live far from here?"

"No, we can be there in fifteen minutes."

"Come on, then!"

And the detective and "the ghost" left the haunted house together.

Thad hired a hack and drove to the Marlowe residence, on Sixty-third street, but before allowing the girl to see her mother, he left her in the carriage while he went to the house and prepared the old lady for the reception.

This was necessary as much on the girl's account, who would have considered it strange that her mother was not expecting her, as it was to prevent the sudden shock that an unexpected meeting would have caused the mother.

Having arranged everything, Thad took the girl within.

The scene that ensued can only be imagined, not described. Suffice it to say that the old lady was as much affected as any sympathetic mother could be on seeing her child come back from the grave.

"And now, Mr. Burr, how shall I ever repay you for what you have done? You have brought me back three children whom I thought were dead, and frightened the ghost away from our old home."

And the old lady's eyes were full of tears as she uttered these words and grasped the detective's hand.

"And do not forget, mother," interposed Wallace, "that Mr. Sharpe discovered who murdered father."

"This is Mr. Burr," corrected Walter.

"I say Sharpe," insisted Wallace.

"And I will not forget that he has done me out of a son," moaned Herme Glowers.

"Well, good friends," rejoined the detective, "you owe me nothing but your blessing—you that feel like blessing. You have made me a great deal happier than I have you, so that I am in your debt."

"My dear, good friend, and I hope I may always call you that, you have my blessing a thousand times!" cried the old lady.

"So say we all!" came a chorus of voices from all present, except poor old Herme.

She scowled.

And Thad Burr took his leave and made his way to the Police Headquarters, to relate to the inspector the thrilling scenes he had passed through in unraveling the *Mystery of Ghost Hall* in his exciting Spirit Chase.

THE END.

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